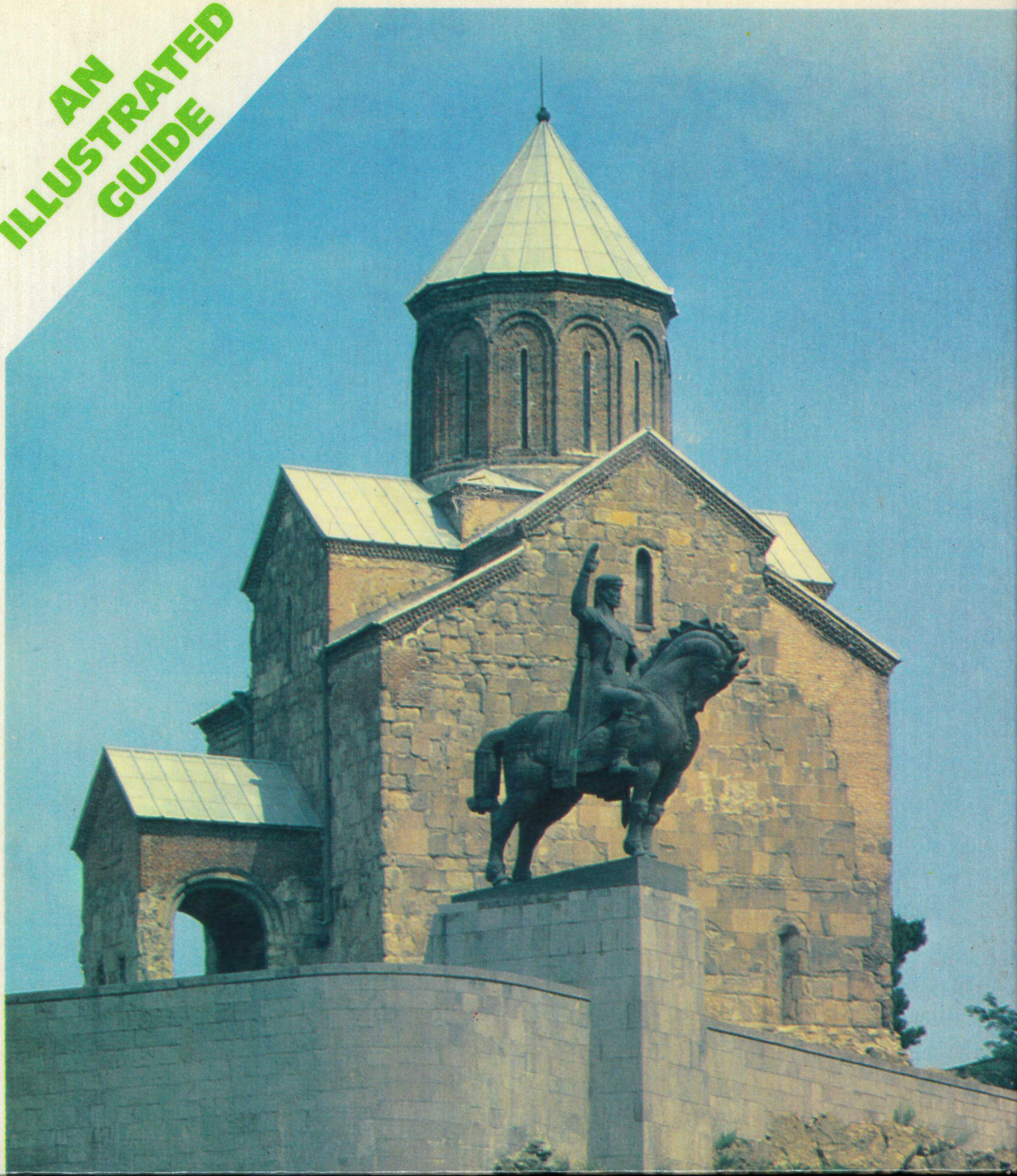
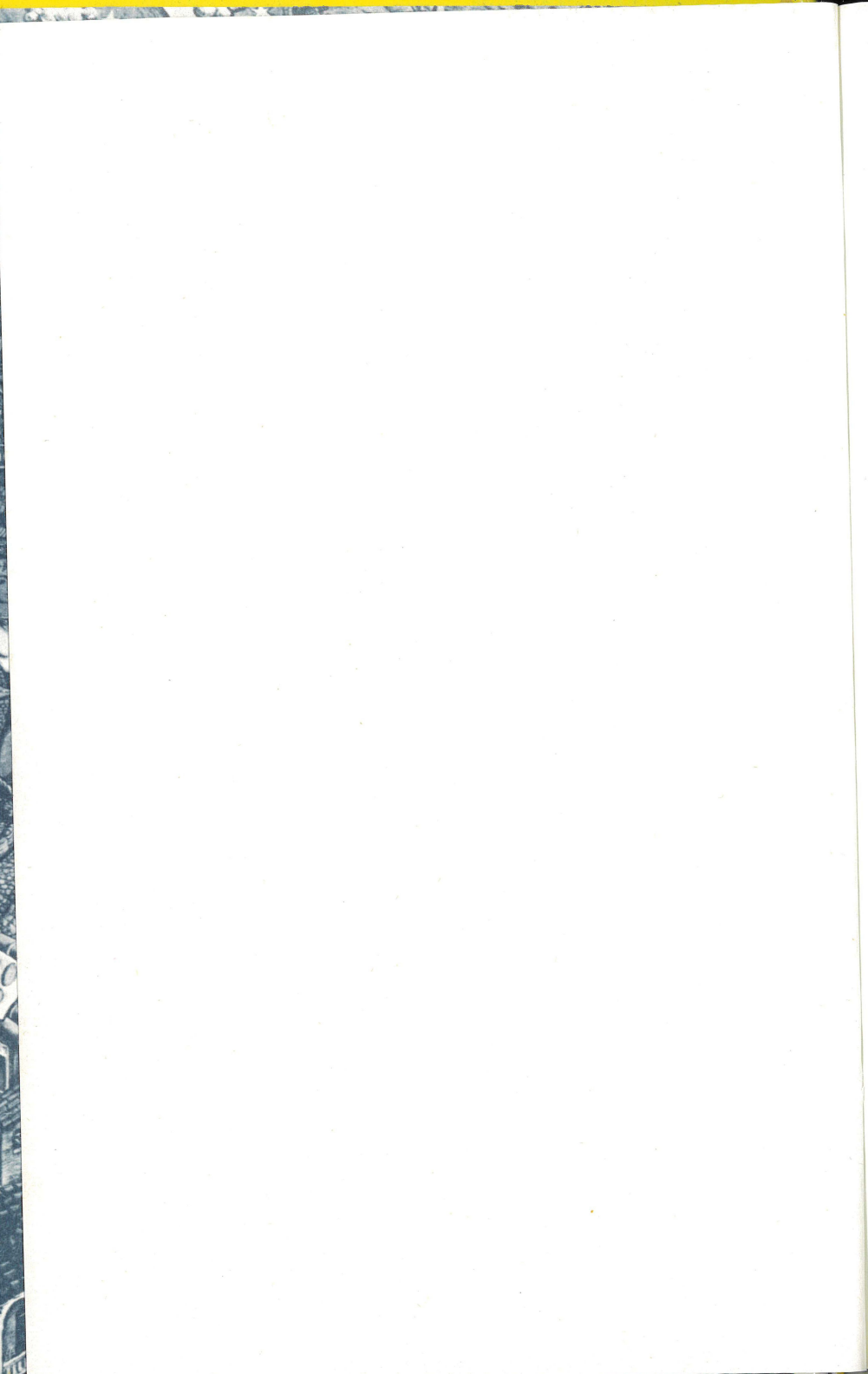
TBILISI

ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS AND ART MUSEUMS

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE





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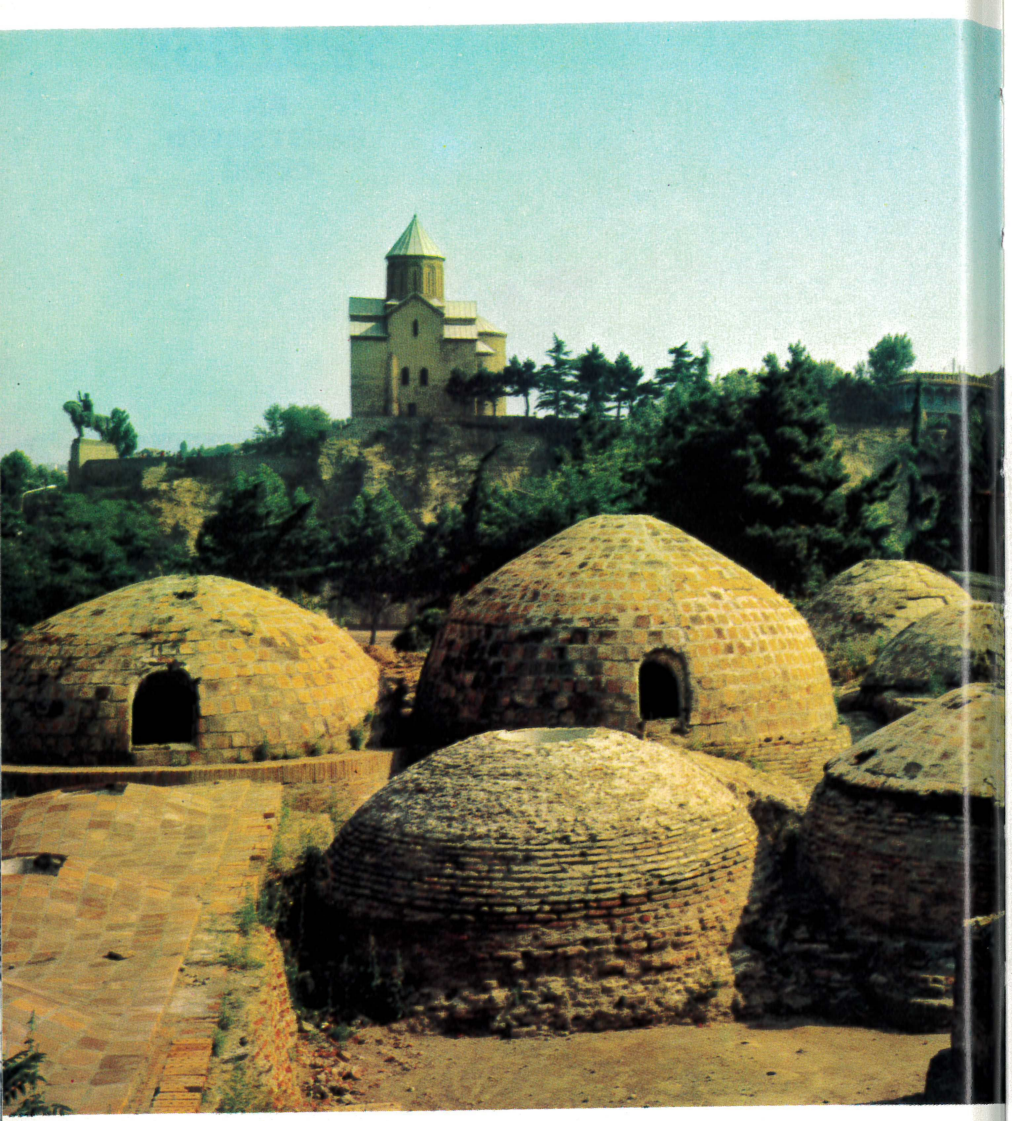

TBILISI

ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS AND ART MUSEUMS

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

Aurora Art Publishers · Leningrad

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Introduction

One of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union, Georgia occupies some 70,000 sq. km in Central and Western Transcaucasia. Its northern boundary is formed by the Caucasian Mountain Range, the western by the Black Sea; its neighbours in the south are Armenia and Turkey, and in the east Azerbaijan. The Republic's population of more than five million is made up of people belonging to more than eighty nationalities.

Georgia has a rich variety of natural features: the eternal snows of the Caucasian Range lie quite close to the caressing warm waves of the Black Sea and to humid subtropics, lush Alpine meadows give place to plains and highlands.

Georgian industrial goods are widely known far beyond the Soviet Union since the Republic exports more than three hundred different articles to seventy countries around the world. Georgia is famous for its tobacco, tea, grapes and citrus fruit; of world renown are its wines.

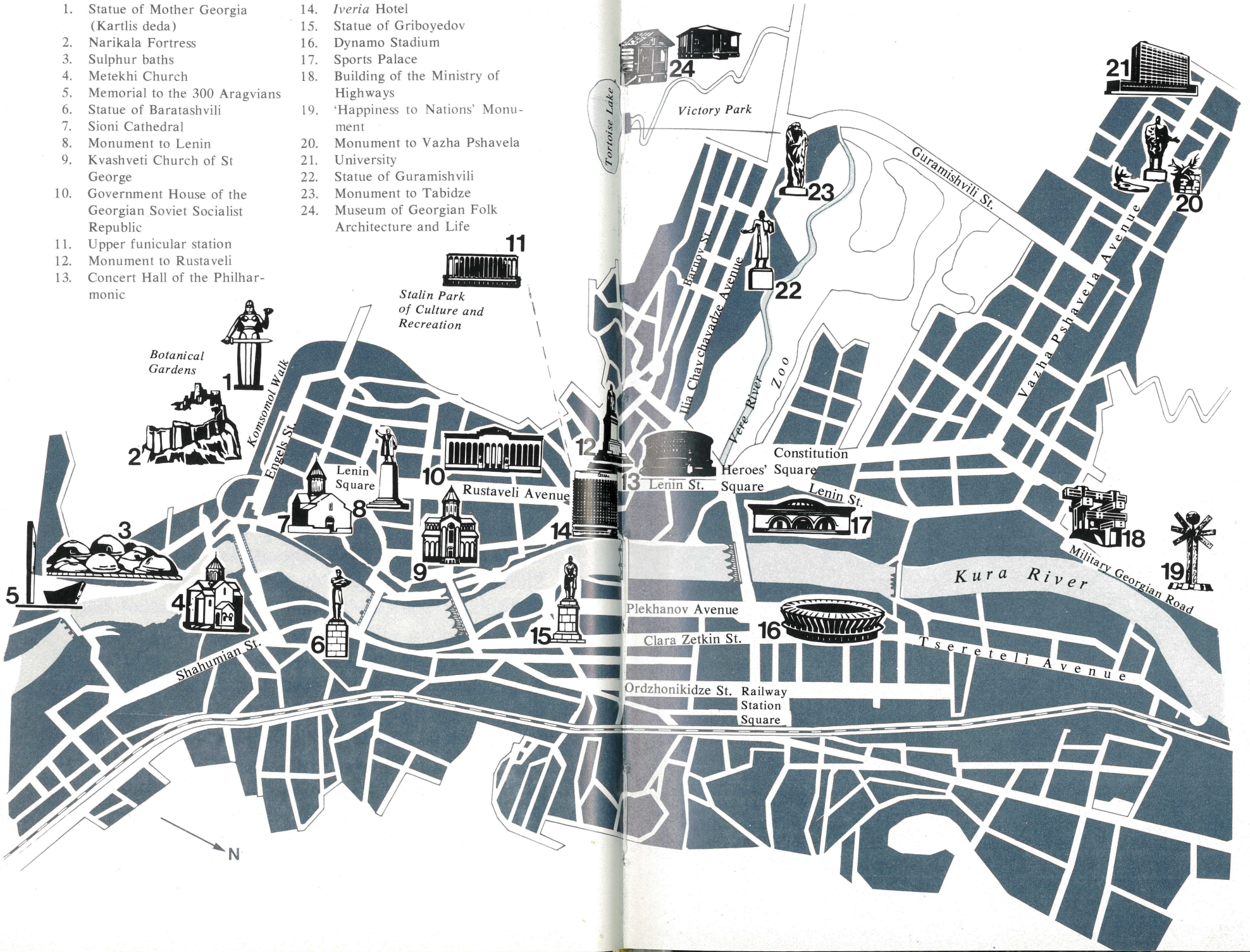
Bearing witness to Georgia's ancient culture are architectural monuments, mural painting and sculpture: the cave ensembles at Vardzia, Uplis-tsikhe, David-Gareja, the churches of Sveti-Tskhoveli, Alaverdi, Jvari, the towers of Svaneti and Khevsureti, as well as remarkable works of ecclesiastical and secular literature crowned by Shota Rustaveli's poem *The Man in the Panther's Skin*. This twelfth-century epic poem has been translated into virtually all the languages of the world. Widely known are the names of the nineteenth-century Georgian men of letters Ilia Chavchavadze, Akaki Tsereteli, Nikoloz Baratashvili, Vazha Pshavela. A school of rhetorics was known to exist in Colchis as early as the fourth century A.D.; in the twelfth century there appeared the first institutions of higher learning, the academies at Ghelati and Ikalto. Today the educational standards of Georgia's population are among the highest in the world. The Georgian Academy of Sciences incorporates over more than forty scientific research institutes and laboratories. The Georgian schools of mathematics, physiology, geology, physics, psychology and archaeology have won world renown.

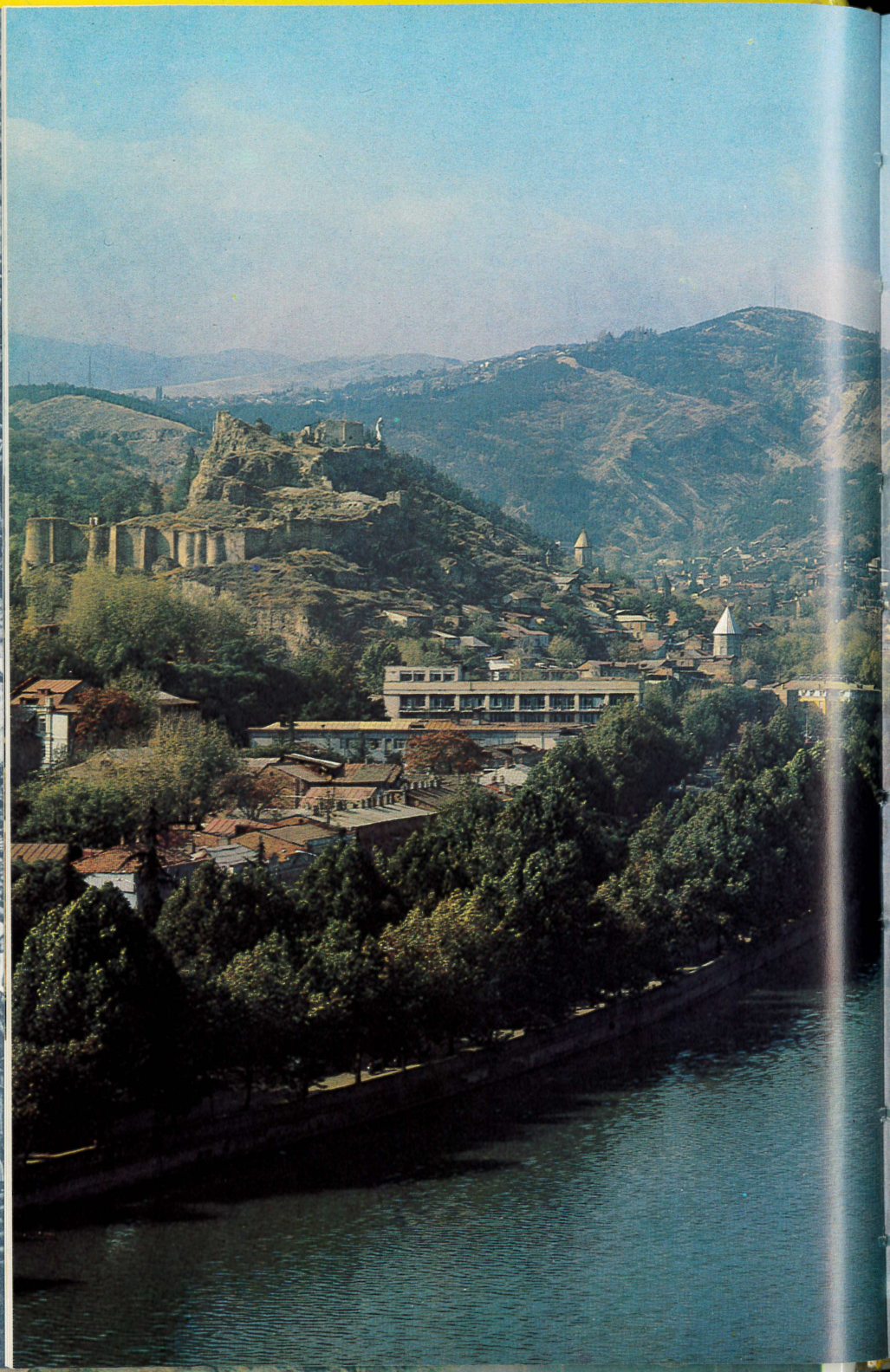
Georgia has twenty-two professional and thirty-seven people's theatres, quite popular are Georgian films, its folk dance and song ensembles perform with great success both at home and abroad. The Republic has produced a number of famous female chess-players, wrestlers and football-players.

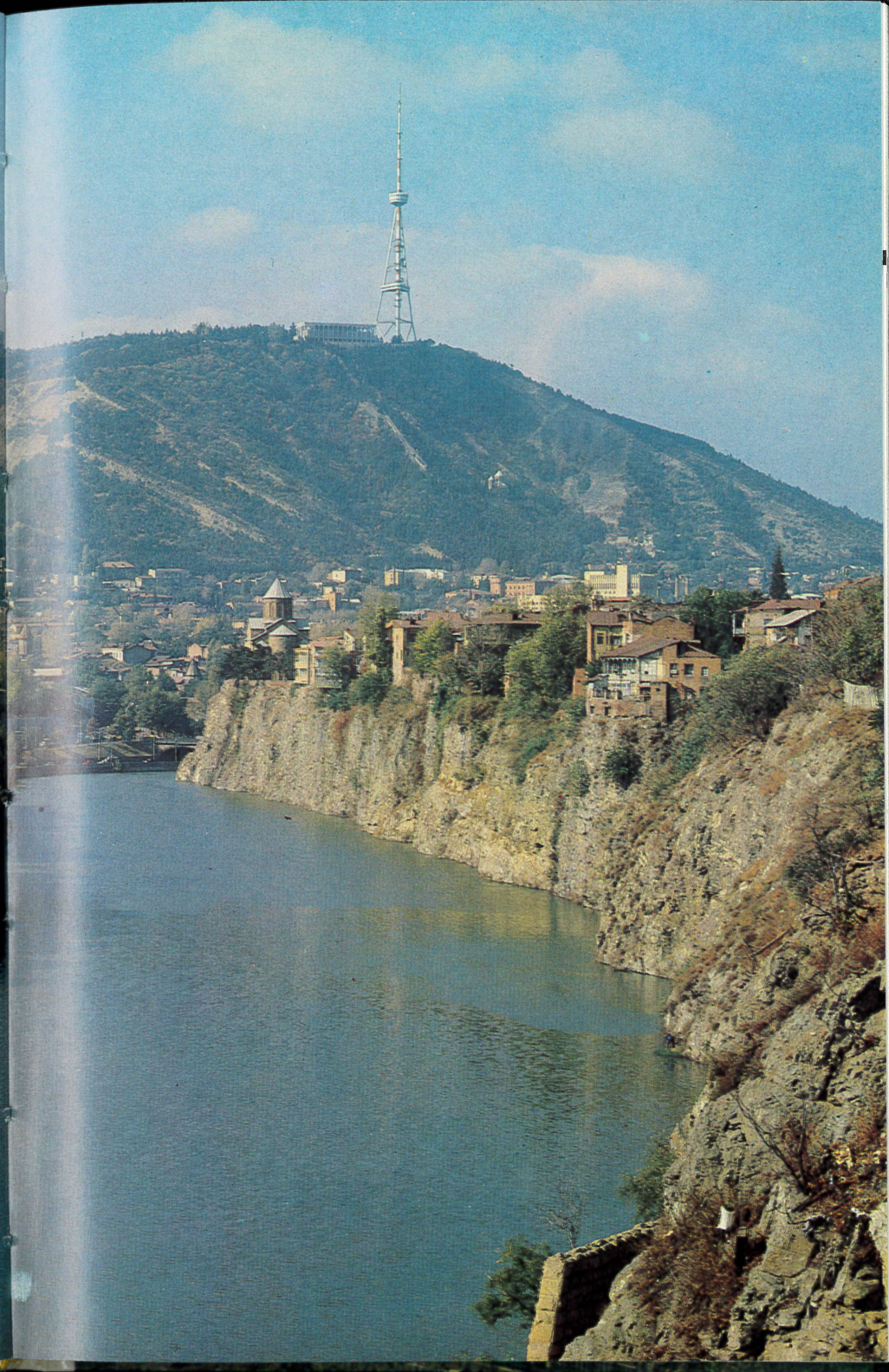
Georgia is rightly called a country of health resorts: such resorts as Borzhomi, Tskhaltubo, Sairme, Shovi, Pitsunda, Gagra, the Green Cape, Abastumani, Bakhmaro, and the highland skiing resort of Bakuriani are open all the year round.

Every year more and more tourists arrive in Georgia, a country steeped in legends and Greek myths about the fabulous Golden Fleece sought by the Argonauts in mystery-shrouded Colchis, about proud Prometheus-Amirani chained to the rock on Mount Caucasus, and about the tragedy of Medea who, though far away from Colchis, never forgot her homeland.

1. Statue of Mother Georgia (Kartlis deda)
2. Narikala Fortress
3. Sulphur baths
4. Metekhi Church
5. Memorial to the 300 Aragvians
6. Statue of Baratashvili
7. Sioni Cathedral
8. Monument to Lenin
9. Kvashveti Church of St George
10. Government House of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic
11. Upper funicular station
12. Monument to Rustaveli
13. Concert Hall of the Philharmonic
14. *Iveria* Hotel
15. Statue of Griboyedov
16. Dynamo Stadium
17. Sports Palace
18. Building of the Ministry of Highways
19. 'Happiness to Nations' Monument
20. Monument to Vazha Pshavela
21. University
22. Statue of Guramishvili
23. Monument to Tabidze
24. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life







Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, is the Republic's largest city, indeed its heart. It is situated in a gorge of the Kura River, at the foot of Mount Mtatsminda (Holy Mount, or Mount David), which dominates the surrounding hills and is an inalienable part of the Tbilisi landscape. The city is 349 sq. km in area, its population totalling 1,200,000. The distinctive beauty of its nature and architecture, the bustling throngs of its smartly dressed people walking the broad avenues impart to this southern city a charm and fascination all its own.

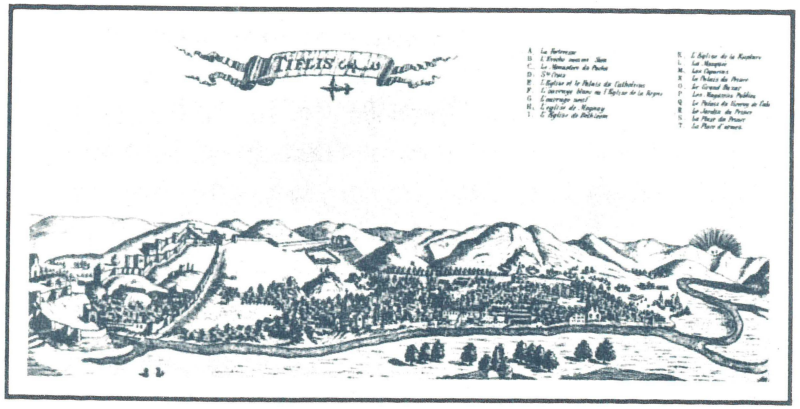
For the first time Georgian Chronicles mention the city as a fortress, while numerous archaeological finds within its present-day territory and environs point to the existence here of human settlements back in the fourth — third millennia B. C. Several legends are associated with the founding of Tbilisi. According to one, when the Georgian King Vakhtang Gorgasali (452—502) was hunting in the forest, his falcon seized a pheasant and, fighting, the two birds fell into a hot spring before the falconers caught up with them. On this spot King Gorgasali decided to found a city which was named after the sulphurous springs nearby ('tbili' means warm). Such is the legend. Yet the chronicles say that it was Gorgasali who built up Tbilisi's defences and transferred to it the capital from ancient Mtskheta. The fortress was completed by King Dachi, his son. The reasons for the founding of the new capital were weighty: here passed the trading routes linking Georgia with East and West; here also was a strategically advantageous position in the narrow gorge of the Kura River. In the sixth and seventh centuries Tbilisi became the hub of the country's political and cultural life, its largest trading and handicraft centre. A bishopric was established there and churches were built, including the Anchiskhati Basilica, the Sioni Cathedral and the Kvashveti Church.

One can hardly name another town that had sustained so many onslaughts, so much destruction, yet was to rise again and again. Ancient Tbilisi survived more than forty onslaughts, and it was very seldom indeed that the city could enjoy spells of really peaceful life. To the Georgians, fighting for their capital was fighting for freedom. In 1122 King David the Builder regained for the city the importance of the country's political and economic centre. Tbilisi, once the capital of the kingdom of Kartli, became the most important centre of a united Georgian kingdom, one of the strongest states in Western Asia.

The unprecedented flourishing of culture and the arts in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is also directly associated with Tbilisi. Active there were the writers and philosophers Ioane Petritsi and Arsen Ikaltoeli. That period saw the development of historical literature and secular poetry (Mose Khoneli, Ioane Shavteli and Chakhrukhadze), culminating in the creation of *The Man in the Panther's Skin*. During that time the famous goldsmiths Beka and Bek-

Tbilisi. Panorama from the south

Mount Mtatsminda



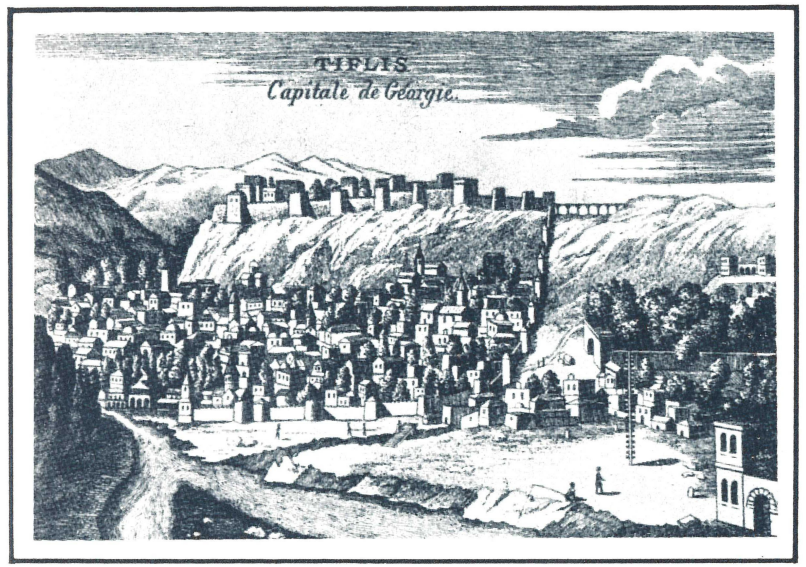
shen Opizari produced brilliant specimens of metalwork, the art of fresco painting and book illumination attained exceptional heights, and majestic architectural ensembles sprang up.

The city flourished till 1226 when it was sacked once again by invaders. Its next rebirth came only in the fourteenth century. In the same century the seat of the Catholic Bishop in the Near East was transferred from Smyrna to Tbilisi. From the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and right up to the thirties of the seventeenth, Tbilisi fell victim to numerous invasions. However, in the 1630s it was built up once again. The French travellers Jean Chardin (1672) and Joseph Tournefort (1700) witnessed the revival of its handicrafts and trade, and wide-scale construction (the building of the magnificent palace of King Rostom). Though after the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 Georgia found herself cut off from the Western world, the general

Tbilisi in the Second Half of the 17th century. Engraving of 1673. From Jean Chardin's book *Travels to Persia and East Indies*

economic growth stimulated the city's cultural development. In 1709 the first Georgian printing house was set up and Rustaveli's poem published. The historian Beri Egnatashvili wrote the New Georgian Chronicle covering the period from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and Georgia's first Code of State and Civil Law appeared.

In 1762 Tbilisi again became the capital of a united Eastern Georgian Kingdom. The Mint was reopened, a seminary of philosophy established, and a new bridge was built across the Kura River. Hostile neighbours and constant incursions compelled King Erekle (Irakli) II to seek a strong ally, and in 1783 the Georgian Treaty was signed, under which the East Georgian Kingdom accepted the protection of



18th-century Tbilisi. Engraving by Joseph Tournefort. 1701

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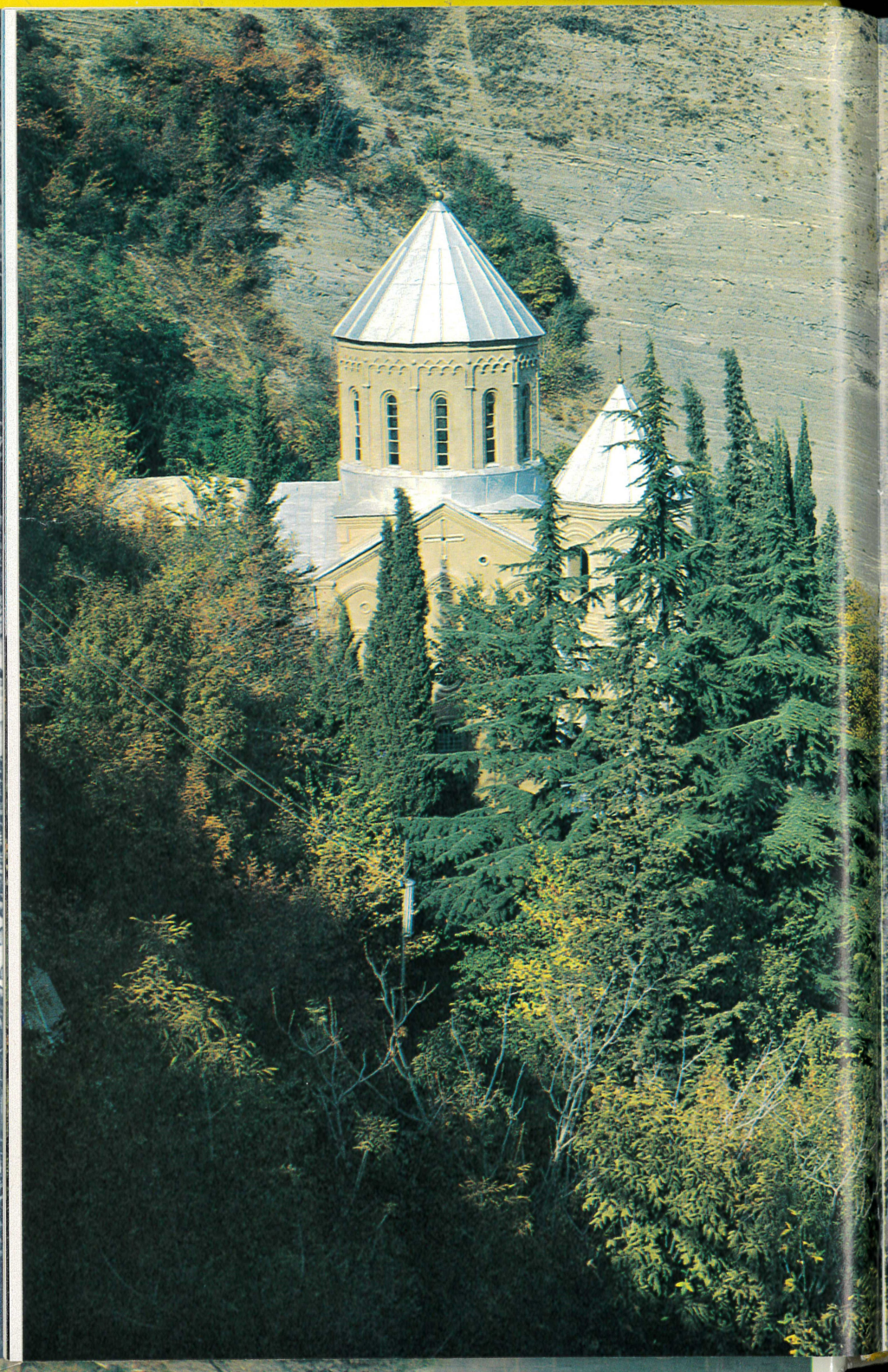
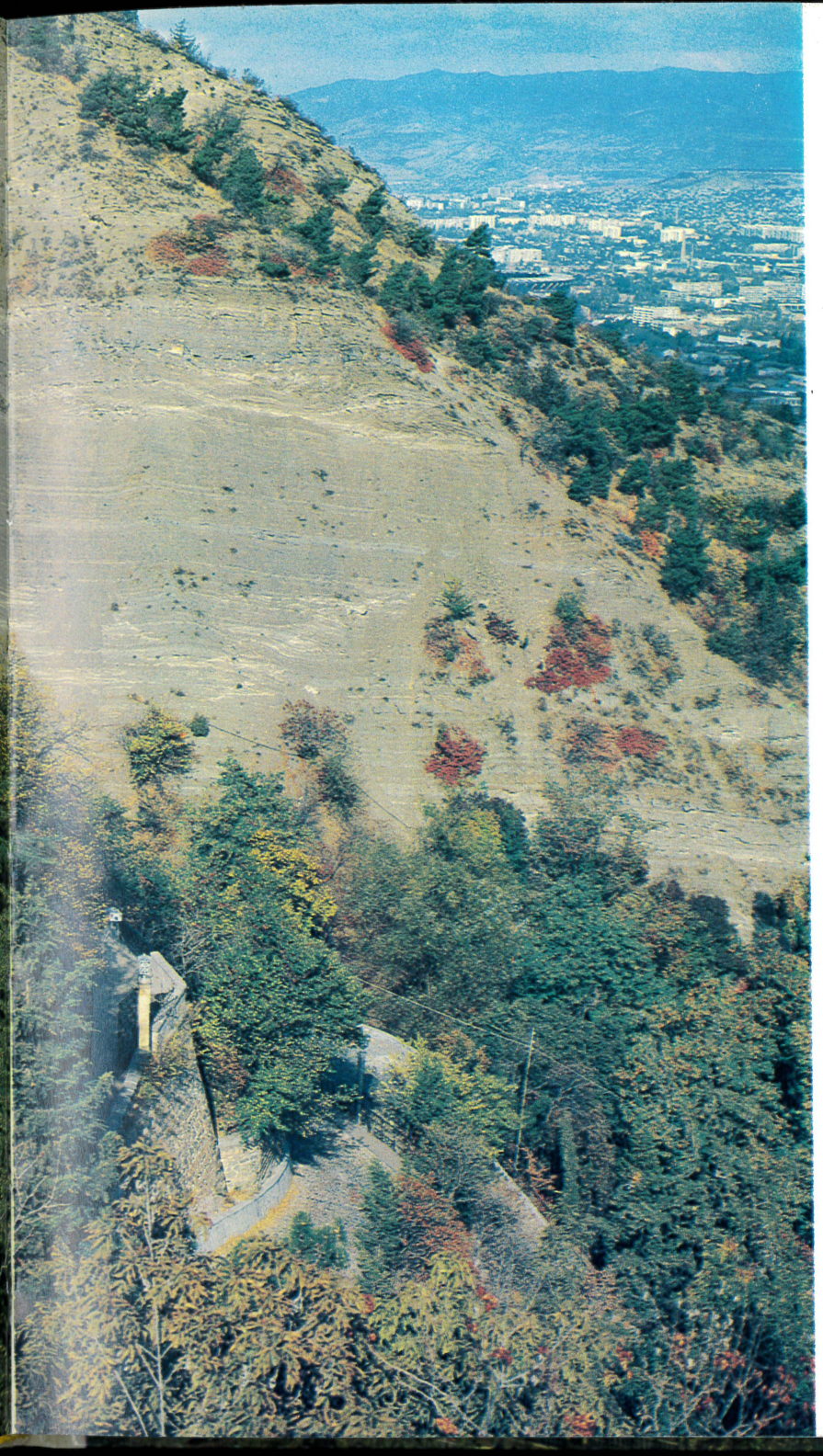
Church of St David on Mount Mtatsminda. Founded in the 6th century, reconstructed in 1855. At the Pantheon of Georgia's Writers and Public Figures





Tomb of Alexander Griboyedov (1795—1829) in the Pantheon of Georgia's Writers and Public Figures. 1832

Russia. This alliance aroused the wrath of Agha Muhammad Khan (King Qajar of Persia), who retaliated in 1795 by razing the city to the ground. Of the many crushing blows Tbilisi sustained throughout its history this was to be the last...

In 1801, when Georgia was united with the Russian Empire, Tbilisi became the administrative centre of Georgian Province, and later the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of Russian forces in the Caucasus. Since 1845 it was the residence of the Governor-General of the Caucasus.

During the early nineteenth century Tbilisi gradually transformed from a medieval feudal town into a European bourgeois city.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the Georgian theatre resumed its activities, and a Russian theatre and an Italian opera house came into being. In addition, a public library, a museum, a botanical garden and an observatory were founded. The city's population kept growing, and new districts appeared in the areas of the Solalaki Gardens and present-day Rustaveli Avenue. Gradually the villages on both banks of the Kura — Kukiya, Chugureti, Vere, Didube and Navtlugi — were incorporated into the city.

The establishment of Soviet power in Georgia in 1921 ushered in a new era in the history of Tbilisi, giving rise to tremendous changes in its social, economic and cultural life. As a result, the city grew into one of the most beautiful and well-appointed industrial and cultural centres of the Soviet Union.

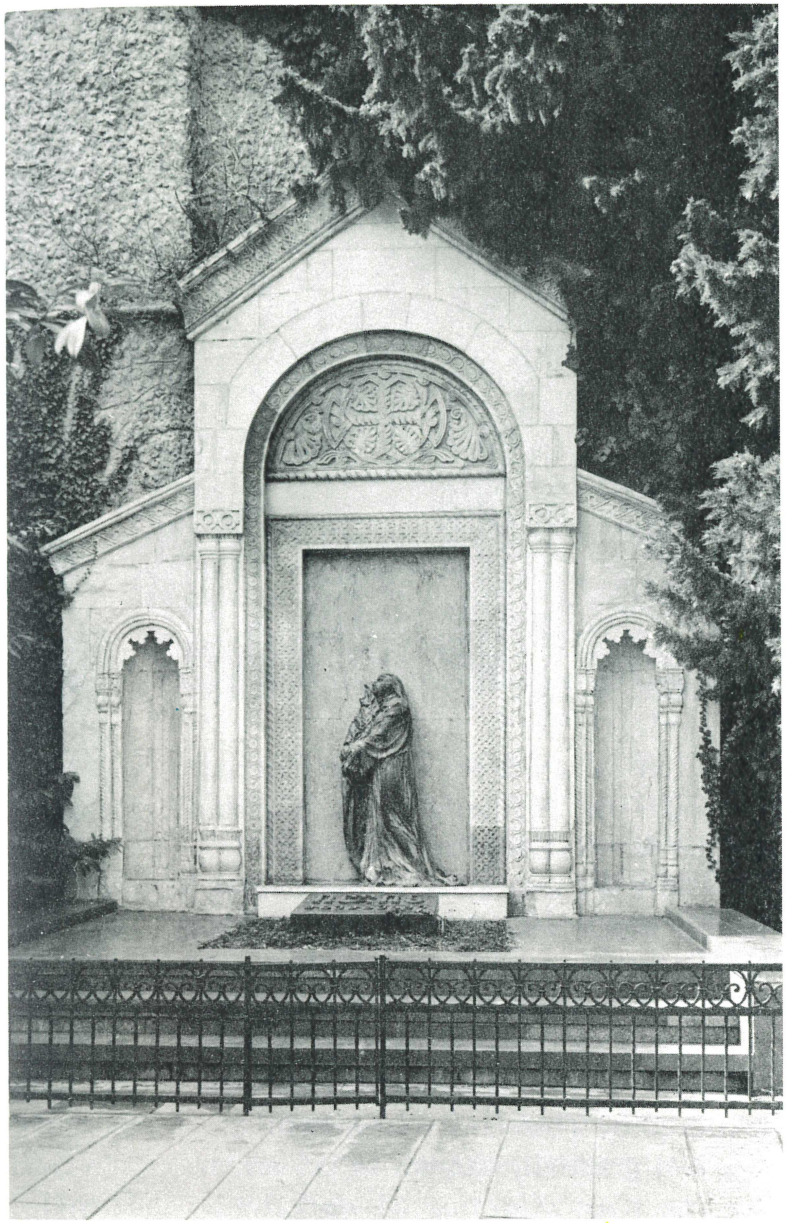
Work on the reconstruction and development of Tbilisi under a single plan was launched from the very first days of Soviet power. Great importance was attached to reconstructing the working-class outskirts, to ensuring convenient communication between the outskirts and the centre, and to improving the communal services.

The Kura River banks were reinforced, major construction work embraced the working-class districts of Nadzaladevi, Didube and Navtlugi, leading to a significant improvement of the communal services in these, once totally neglected, areas.

Measures towards the reconstruction of the capital brought into focus the compositional structure of its central nucleus (parallel running thoroughfares on both sides of the river with a complex system of connecting junctions and blocks of flats).

The planting of evergreen trees along the streets, the arrangement of new parks and, particularly, the planting of trees and gardens along the embankments all contributed to improving the microclimate and transforming the external aspect of the city. The Tbilisi Sea — a man-made reservoir which irrigates 80,000 hectares of fertile land and favourably affects the climate — was created, complete with a park along its shores.

Tbilisi is famous for its unforgettable festivals: the Spring and Autumn Art Exhibitions, the *Flower Day* Festival in the spring, the music festival *Transcaucasian Tunes* and, of course, the most crowded and col-



Tomb of Ilia Chavchavadze (1837—1907) in the Pantheon of Georgia's Writers and Public Figures. 1913. Sculptor Yakov Nikoladze (1876—1951)

ourful of them all, the popular international festival of labour and brotherhood, the *Tbilisoba*, celebrated on the last Sunday in October.

There are several ways of ascending Mount Mtatsminda which soars above the city to the height of about three hundred metres: along a winding picturesque footpath, by a motor road, by a suspended cable road or a cable railway, the funicular, right from the city centre. If you take the latter, most favoured by Tbilisians, a wonderful panorama of the city will gradually unfold. In the middle of the road the car stops affording an opportunity to visit the

Upper funicular station on Mount Mtatsminda. 1938. Architects Zakhari Kurdiani (1909—1982), Nadezhda Kurdiani (1909—1979) and Alexander Valobuyev (1907—1970)

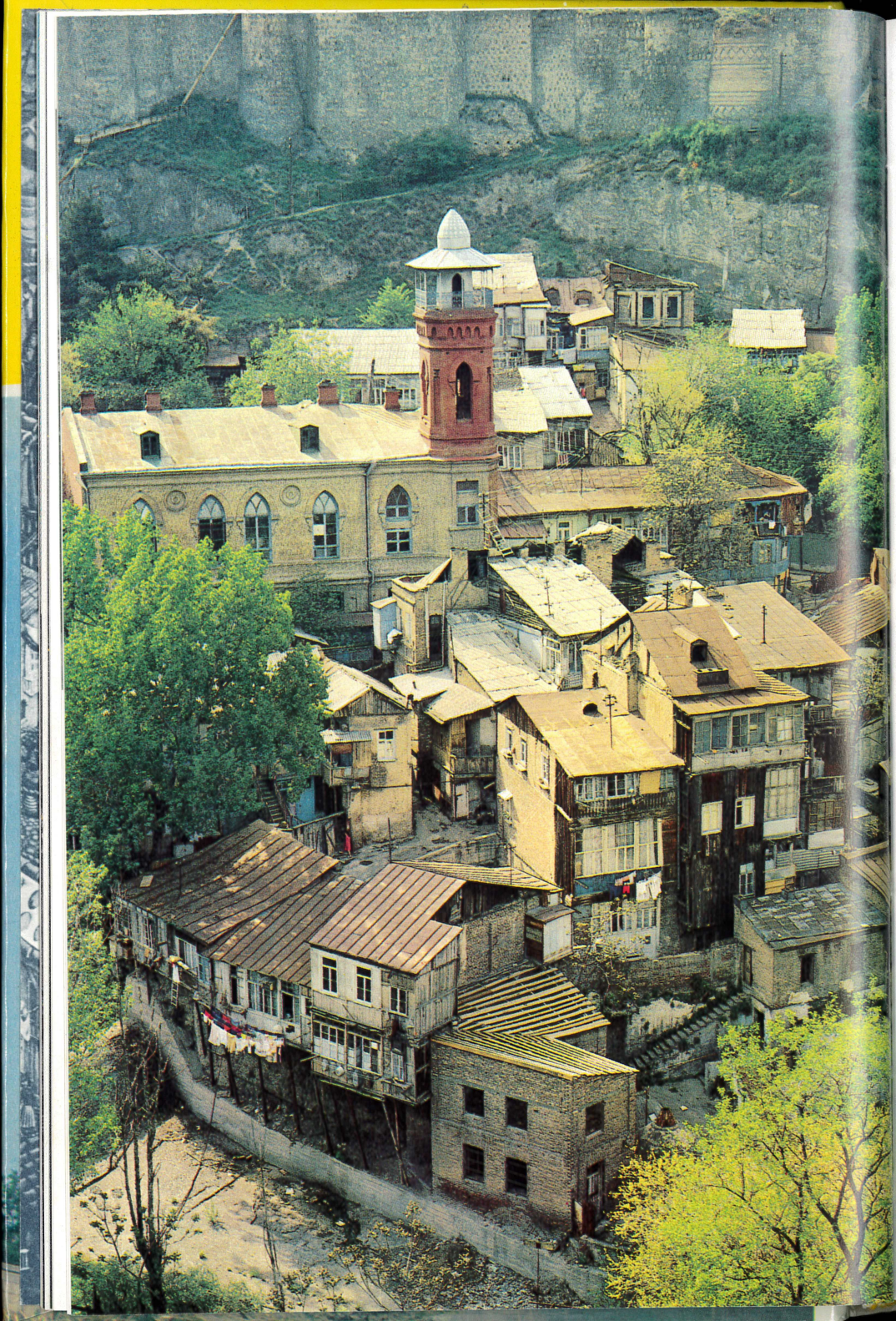
Pantheon of Georgia's Writers and Public Figures. The memorial is located on man-made terraces at the **Church of St David** built in 1855 on the site where in the sixth century were the cell and chapel of St David, one of the thirteen missionaries who spread Christianity in Georgia. A grotto on the lower terrace contains the **tomb of** the Russian writer and diplomat **Alexander Griboyedov** (1795—1829), who willed to be buried on Mount Mtatsminda, 'Tbilisi's most poetical site'. The inscription on the tomb: *Neither your intelligence, nor your accomplishments shall ever fade from Russian memory, but why, oh why, should my love survive you!*, belongs to the writer's youthful widow, Nino, daughter of the famous poet and public figure Alexander Chavchavadze.

Buried on the upper, broader terrace are writers and public figures of Georgia. In the central part, near the rock, is the **grave of Ilia Chavchavadze** (1837—1907), a classic of Georgian literature and an ardent fighter for Georgia's emancipation. The tombstone is shaped as a wall, leaning on which is a female figure personifying the sorrowing **Motherland** (1913, sculptor Yakov Nikoladze). Also here are the graves of the poets and writers Nikoloz Baratashvili, Akaki Tsereteli, Vazha Pshavela, Jacob Gogebashvili, David Kldiashvili, Galaktion Tabidze, Simon Chikovani, Giorgi Leonidze; the stage-producer Kote Marjanishvili; the painter Lado Gudiashvili; the actors Akaki Khorava and Sergo Zakariadze; the mathematician Niko Muskhelishvili.

Laid out on the upper plateau is a vast park of culture and recreation with the Upper funicular station in its centre. Its ground-floor halls house a library, reading-rooms, children's rooms, with a restaurant and banquet hall on the floor above. The main element of the building (1938, architects Zakhari and Nadezhda Kurdiani and Alexander Valobuyev) is a broad terrace skirting it on three sides. The terrace's arcade supported by tall, slim columns, the openwork ceiling and jutting cornice give an impression of airy elegance.

In 1972 the banquet hall was enriched by an excellent panel, *Homage to Pirosmani*, by the painter Nikolai Ignatov. Marvellously evoking the spirit of old Tbilisi, it is one of the best specimens of Georgian monumental painting in our time.

Nikolai Ignatov (*b.* 1937) *Homage to Pirosmani*. Panel. 1972. In the banquet hall of the Upper funicular station's building on Mount Mtatsminda



From the terrace and viewing platforms beneath the station unfolds a panorama of Tbilisi sprawling along the banks of the Kura and surrounded on three sides by mountains: to the west we see the spurs of the Trialeti Range, to the south the Solalaki ridge and Mount Tabori, to the east is Mount Makhata. Only to the north the mountains step aside to reveal the magnificent Caucasus Range with the lofty snow-capped peak of Mount Kazbek in the distance.

Part of the city is situated on rather steep slopes. At the foot of Mount Mtatsminda is Tbilisi's central district with Rustaveli Avenue, the building of the Central Committee of the Georgian Communist Party, Government House, Lenin Square with a statue of Lenin, the large Park of the Communards, the Opera and Ballet House, the Georgian Affiliate of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CPSU Central Committee, the high-rises of the *Iveria* and *Ajaria* Hotels and the huge rotunda of the Philharmonic Concert Hall.

To the right of Lenin Square lies the Old Town, the cradle of Tbilisi. Beneath the ruins of its ancient citadel narrow alleys cascade down the slopes. Crowded with small houses, they present a typical picture of a medieval town. At the point where the Metekhi Church stands high on the river bank one can see the old district of Isni.

Stretching parallel to the city's main thoroughfare, Rustaveli Avenue, on the opposite left bank of the river, is Plekhanov Avenue, terminating at the

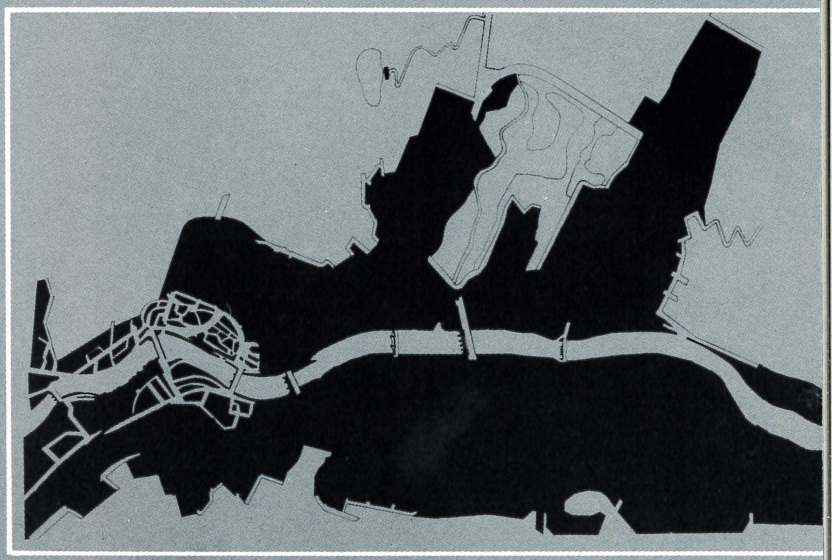
Legvta-Khevi, a district of the Old Town by the foot of the Narikala Fortress

huge bowl of the stadium. These two thoroughfares, running along both banks of the Kura, determine Tbilisi's layout. Yet, having found itself cramped in the narrow gorge, the city began rapidly to expand in width. Gleaming white in the distance are the new residential districts of Avchala, Gldani, Vazisubani, Navtlugi, and beyond Mount Makhata there opens the view of the large man-made reservoir, the Tbilisi Sea.

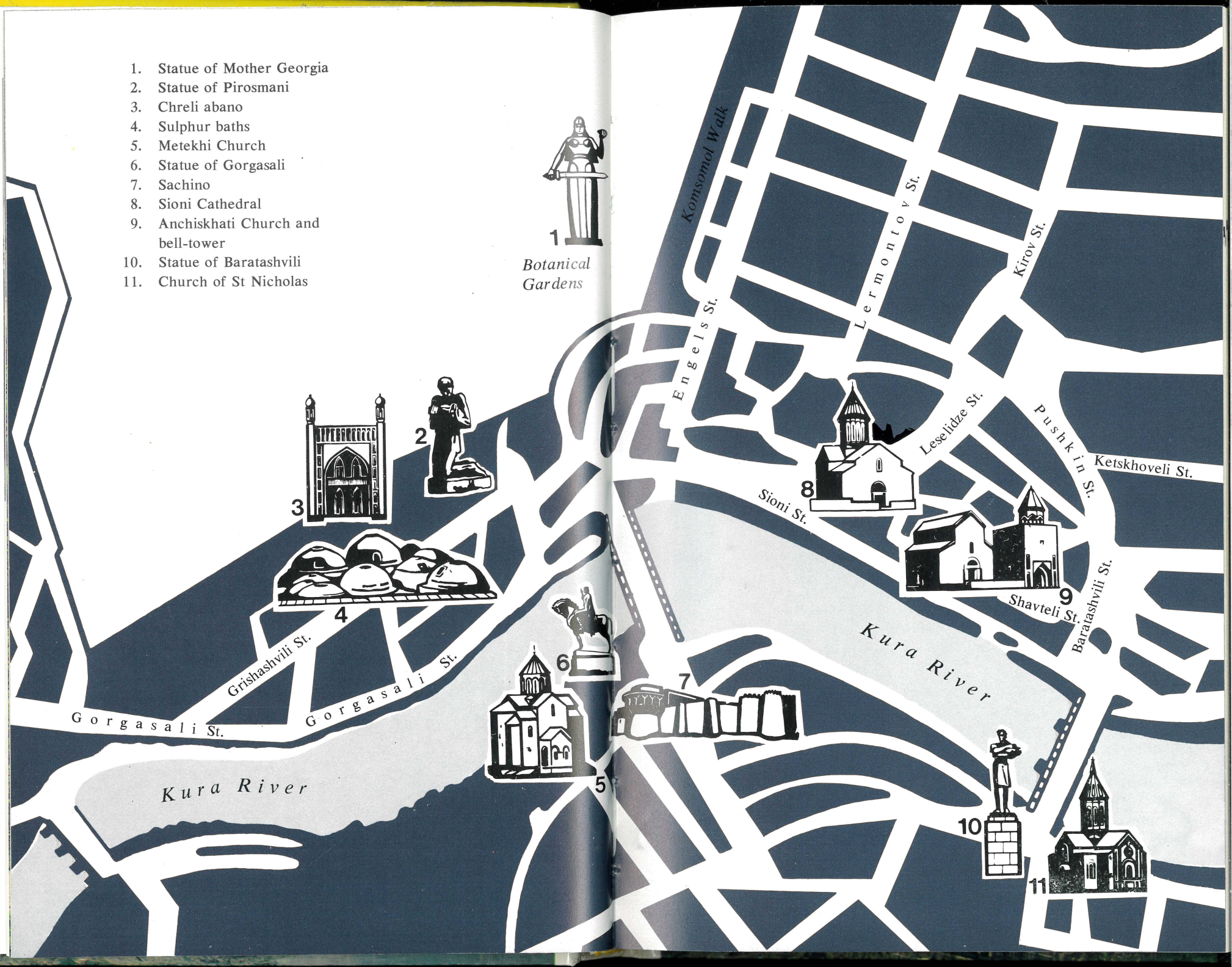
This is how Tbilisi looks from Mount Mtatsminda, its aspect continuously changing from dawn to dusk when, flooded with electric lights, the city seems to emerge out of a fairytale.

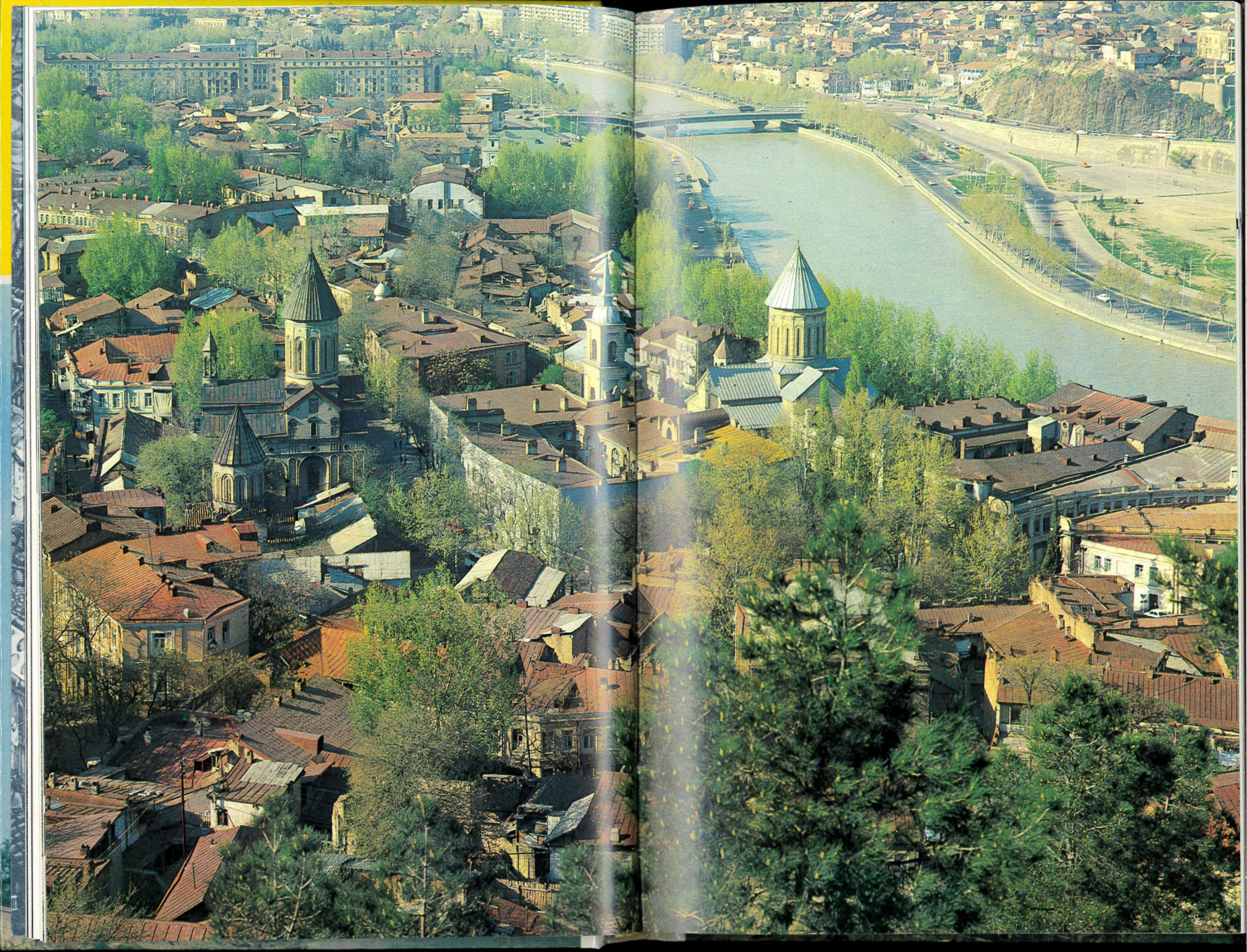
Yet, in order to better understand the character of Tbilisi, to better sense its rhythms, one should go down, mingle with the streams of people and vehicles, visit the colourful and noisy bazaars, walk along its streets and, especially, its festively attired Rustaveli Avenue.

The Old Town



1. Statue of Mother Georgia
2. Statue of Pirosmani
3. Chreli abano
4. Sulphur baths
5. Metekhi Church
6. Statue of Gorgasali
7. Sachino
8. Sioni Cathedral
9. Anchiskhati Church and bell-tower
10. Statue of Baratashvili
11. Church of St Nicholas



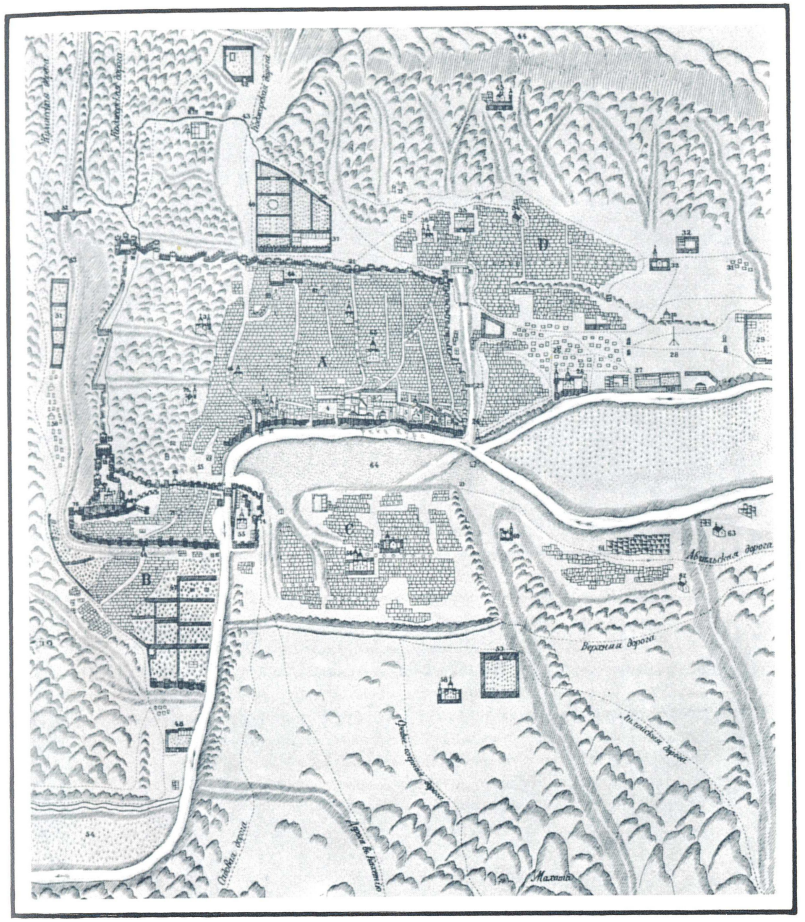


Judging by the plan drawn up by the historian and geographer Prince Vakhushti Bagrationi in the eighteenth century, the city of Tbilisi consisted of the districts Kala, Seidabad and Isni, with the suburb Garetubani adjoining it on the north. Kala was the main part of the city. It was surrounded by a defensive wall which stretched from the south-east first along the Tsavkisis-tskali riverlet, then steeply rose to the Narikala Fortress to reach, along the slope of the Solalaki ridge, the Shahis-takhti ('Shah's throne') fort. From that point the wall descended northwards to the Digomi Gates (the corner of today's Baratashvili Street), then sharply turned eastwards towards the Kura (this latter part of the wall was discovered in the street during reconstruction work in 1979).

One could enter the Kala district through the Ganji Gates from the south, the Bathhouse Gates from the east, the Mukhran Gates from the north and the Kojor Gates from the west (today this is the place where Leselidze Street joins Lenin Square).

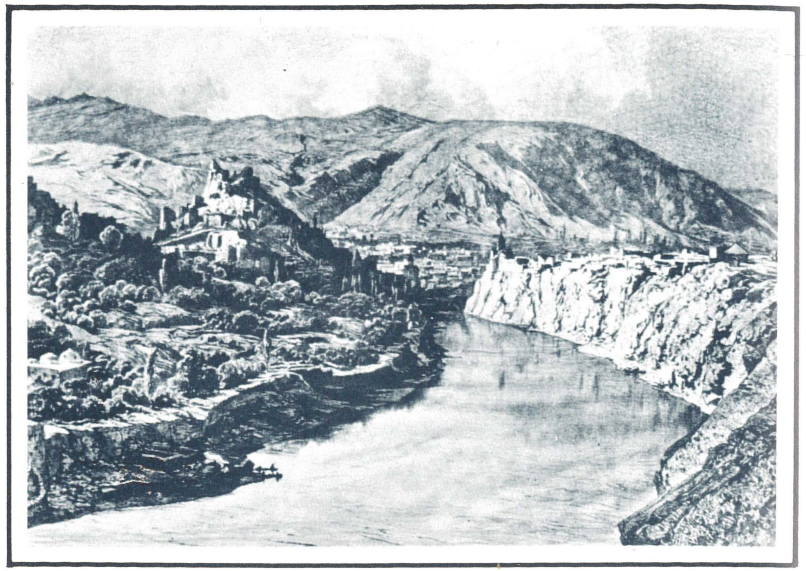
Kala incorporated the two main squares of the city — the **Tatar** (present day **Gorgasali Square**) and

←
General view of the built-up areas along the right bank of the Kura, with the towering Sioni Cathedral, Church of Jvaris-mama and caravanserai



Royal (now **Erekle II Square**). Crossing the latter was the high street laid along the river. Kala was the district of royal palaces, churches, caravanserais (with inns and warehouses to accommodate the arriving caravans). The wealthy Anchiskhati was the district of the aristocracy, and in its depth were the dwellings of merchants and craftsmen. The narrow

Vakhushti Bagrationi.
Plan of Tbilisi. 1735



alleys with their rows of booths and *dukhans*, and named according to the occupation of the craftsmen and tradesmen — Silversmiths', Blacksmiths', Bath-housing, Dyers' — made up the extremely colourful Tbilisi bazaars.

Seidabad was situated between the Kura and the slopes of Tabori ridge, on the territory of the famous sulphur baths and present-day balneological complex. Its name derives from the settlement of the Iranian tribe of Seids which resided here in the seventeenth century; another name that became habitual in the early nineteenth century is that of Kharpukhi, from the village that had merged with the town.

The district of Isni on the high left bank of the Kura was linked with Kala by a bridge. The word

Grigori Gagarin (1810—1893). *Tbilisi. Panorama from the South*. Mid-19th century

'Isni' (Isani) means a fortified place, citadel. Later, when a palace and church were built here, the district was called Avlabar, or place around the palace.

The ancient part of Tbilisi adjoins the city's central Lenin Square. Present-day Dadiani, Pushkin and Baratashvili Streets run along the line of the one-time outer wall to the south-east of which the ancient town was situated. It is advisable to start the acquaintance with the city from the plateau in front of the Metekhi Church which provides a convenient observation platform. Extant in the Old Town are numerous architectural monuments, both ecclesiastical and secular. The picturesque topography of the land seems to have been used very cleverly: the built-up area below

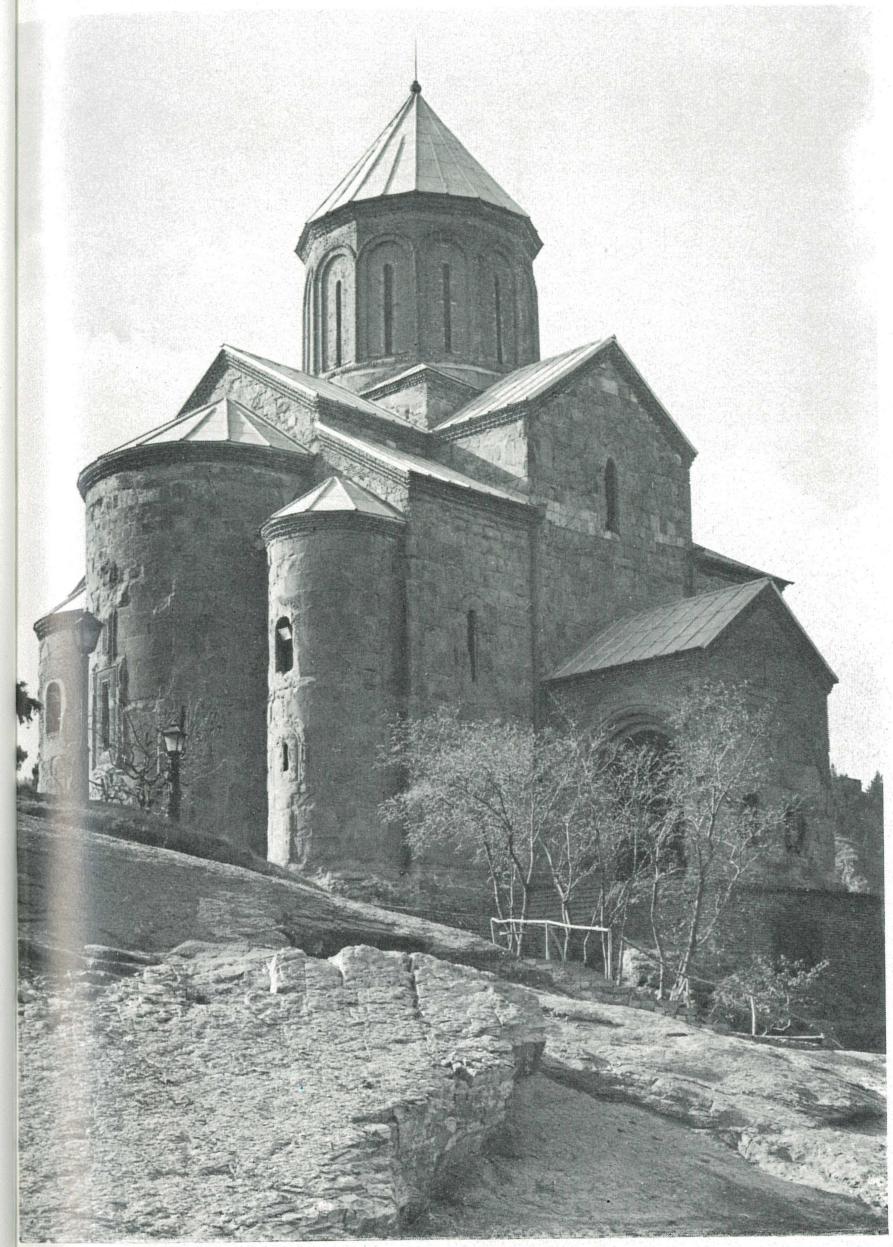
Carl Zaar. *Darbazi of Porakishvili*. 1903

is shielded on one side by the imposing Narikala Fortress and, on the other, by the soaring cliff of the Kura River bank surmounted by the Metekhi Church, with a view of Mount Mtatsminda.

In 1975 the Old Town was proclaimed a preservation zone; since then large-scale explorative work and archaeological excavations are going on there, and special restoration workshops are resurrecting individual sites.

The nucleus of the Old Town has preserved the layout, the entire network of streets and squares of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though the architectural aspect of buildings and ensembles has changed. Careful study of historical documents, schemes, plans, and drawings of the Old Town shows that whereas in the Isni district and outside the city walls regular development in the nineteenth century was based on new plans, in the Kala district new houses were built along already existing streets with the use of the old foundations or even still standing parts of houses. These buildings date mainly to the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, a period following the unification of Georgia with Russia.

Before the latest destruction of Tbilisi in the late eighteenth century, predominant in the city — judging by the preserved specimens — were two types of residential building traditional in Georgia throughout the millennia: the *baniani sakhli* and the *darbazi* (for a description see p. 171—173). In Tbilisi these types of dwelling gradually disappeared. The only instance



Metekhi Church. 13th century

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Metekhi Church. 13th century. In the distance, the Old Town and the Narikala Fortress

of *darbazi*, known as Darbazi of Porakishvili, can be seen at No. 11 Chekhov Street.

The nineteenth century saw the appearance of new types of houses more in tune with the requirements of the day. These are mainly two-storey, more seldom three-storey, buildings with suites of rooms opening onto a common open balcony, whose floor area is most frequently not smaller than that of the rooms. The balcony, the indispensable and leading decorative element of the house, was reached by outside staircases. The storeys on the façades were articulated by bands of simple design, while the windows and doors of the first floor, in distinction from the rectangular shape of the ground-floor ones, were usually arched.

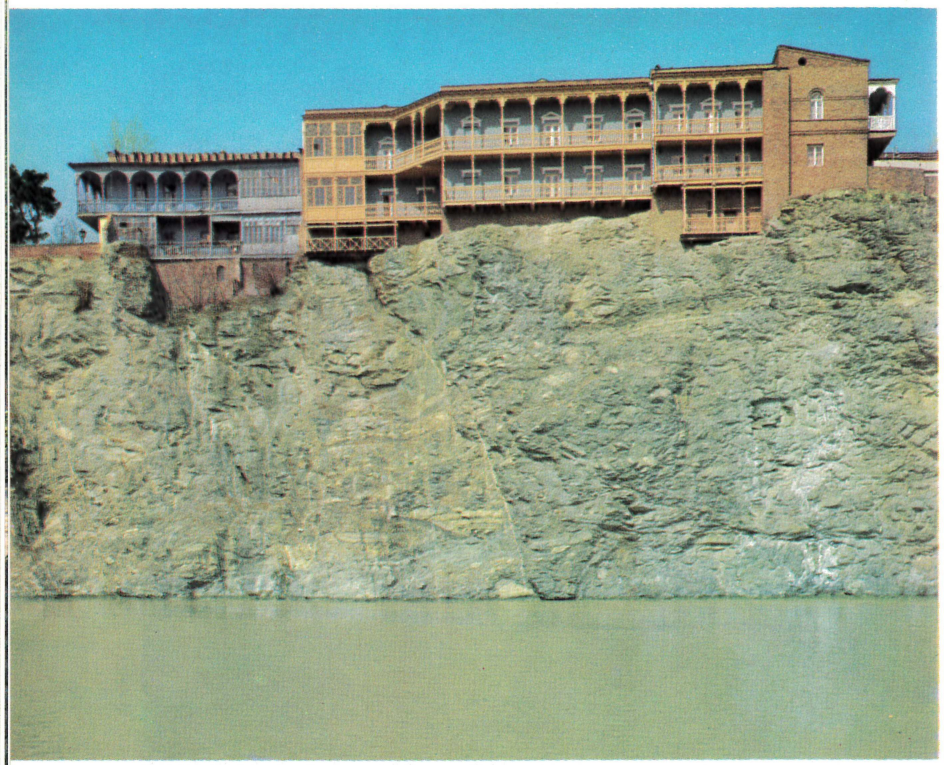
The architecture of Tbilisi's residential dwellings of the nineteenth century, on the one hand, reflects the compositional devices of Russian Classicism and, on the other, carries on the age-long architectural traditions of Georgia so well attuned to her nature and climate.

Standing on the plateau is the **Metekhi Church**, the only extant monument of the entire palace complex. It is rectangular in plan, with three semicircular apses; its dome is supported on four piers. Its walls of dressed stone have in places preserved the aspect of the thirteenth century. Inside the walls are laid of brick with partial use of stone. The window surrounds and the crosses above them are decorated with carving. The vertical axis of the eastern façade, including

Equestrian statue of Vakhtang Gorgasali (452—502) on the Metekhi plateau. 1967. Sculptor Elguja Amashukeli (*b.* 1928), architects Teimuraz Kandelaki (*b.* 1928) and David Morbedadze (*b.* 1926)

the window, the cross above it, and the ornamental lozenges on both sides at the bottom of the cross, have, since the eleventh century, become a traditional feature in Georgian architecture. The stone carving is of the highest order. The brickwork of the walls and the drum of the dome were added during later restorations.

The building of the castle and church in Isni dates to the fifth century and is associated with the name of Vakhtang Gorgasali. In the twelfth century here was a castle from which Queen Tamar blessed her



Residential houses along the brow of the Metekhi plateau

cohorts, as she dispatched them off to battle. In 1235 the Metekhi Church and Palace were destroyed, to be restored again in the seventies and eighties of the same century; by the seventeenth century the castle was converted into a gunpowder depot, and in 1819 it was demolished.

In 1967 the area in front of the church was cleared of later buildings, a stone parapet was built around the plateau and on its brow, high above the Kura River, a bronze **equestrian statue of Vakhtang Gorgasali** was erected (1967, sculptor Elguja Amashukeli, architects Teimuraz Kandelaki, David Morbedadze). The stately figure is seen astride a heavy charger, Gorgasali's right arm is raised as if solemnly endorsing the founding of the city. The austere face with slightly squinting eyes, the aquiline nose and compressed lips seem to bear out the name Gorgasali which in Georgian means Wolfhead. The monument blends well with the old-town surroundings.

Above the Metekhi plateau, along the edge of the Avlabar heights, stand the ruins of the Sachino ('Noble') Palace, built in 1776 by King Erekle II for his wife, Queen Darejan. Erected on the ruins of the ancient castle walls is a large round tower with an open space at the top surrounded by cantilevered wooden balconies. In the court there is an oratory. Today the palace is restored and on display in it are handicraft articles and souvenirs made at the workshops of the Georgian Society for the Preservation of Cultural Monuments.

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Sachino, the Palace of Queen Darejan. 1776

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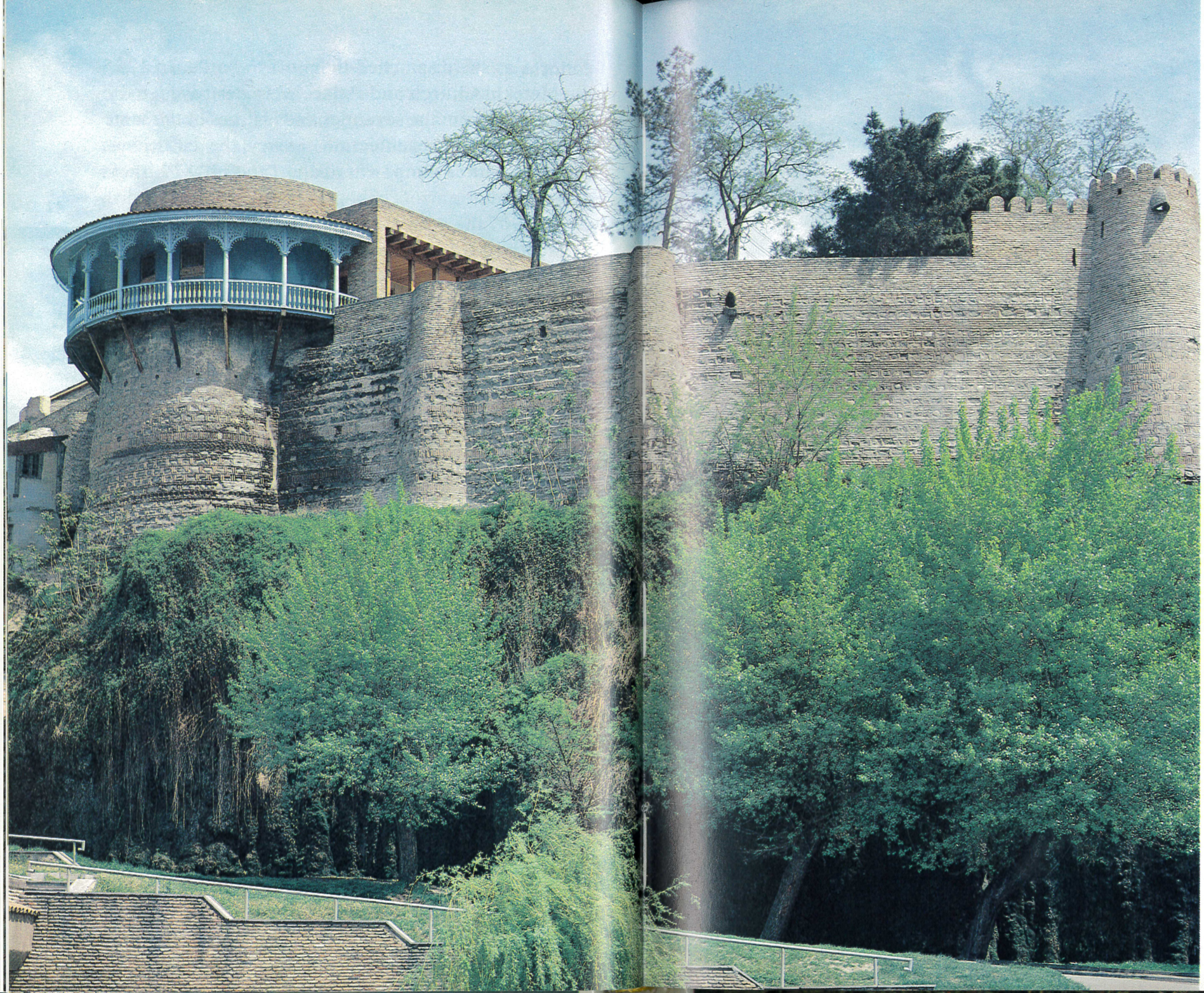
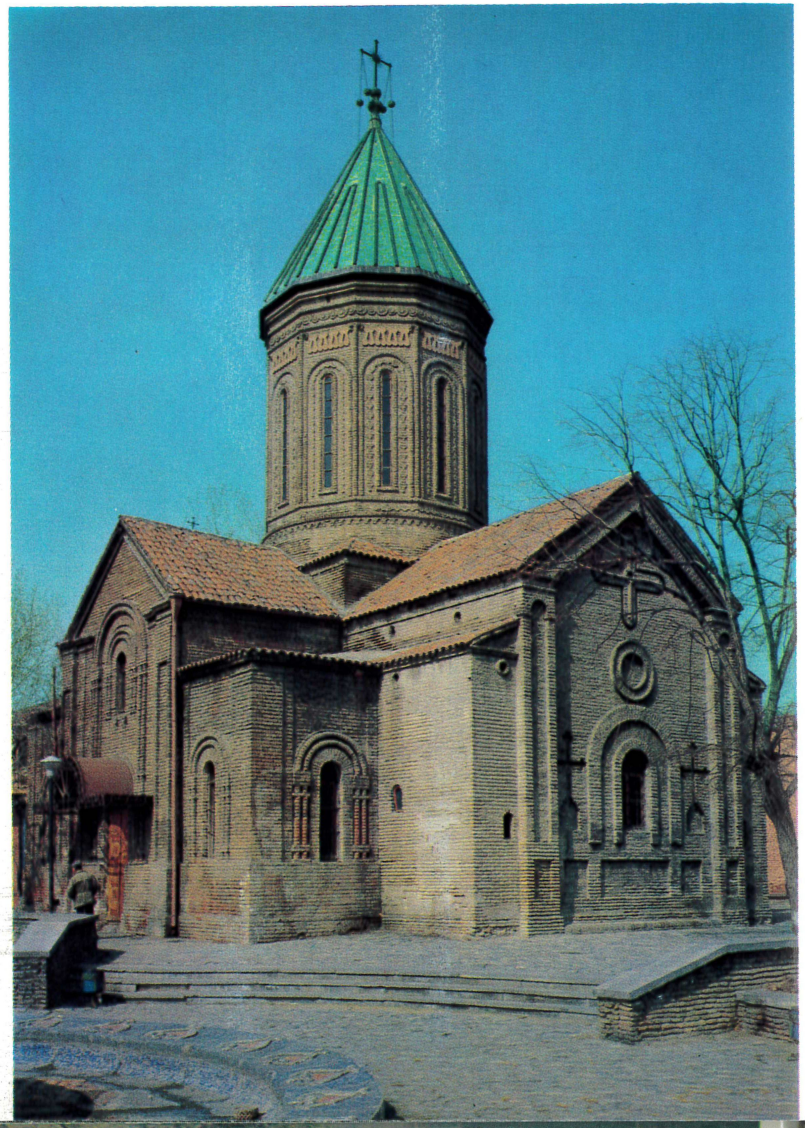
Restored old buildings on the brow of the Metekhi plateau



←←
Vinny (Wine) Rise. Restored area
←
Statue of Nikoloz Baratashvili (1817—1845) in Khetagurov Street. 1976. Sculptor Boris Tsibadze (*b.* 1931), architect Shota Kavlashvili (*b.* 1925)

Church of St Nicholas in Khetagurov Street. Early 19th century. Now used for folk music concerts



The rocky left bank of the Kura River, beginning from the Metekhi plateau, is built up along its brow with picturesque old residential houses. Their cantilevered wooden balconies hang over the river, reflected in its waters. A striking view is afforded by old houses of this type along the Baratashvili Rise. Here restoration work revealed characteristic old-town buildings arranged in an amphitheatre. In a small square surrounded by these buildings is a **statue of** the nineteenth-century Georgian romantic poet **Nikoloz Baratashvili** (1976, sculptor Boris Tsibadze, architect Shota Kavlashvili). In this graceful figure the author endeavoured to convey the noble aspirations of the lyrical poet who died at an early age.

Close to the monument by the embankment is the **Church of St Nicholas**, remarkable for its frescoes which were painted in the early nineteenth century by the Tbilisi artist Gigo Zaziashvili. After restoration the church has been used as a concert hall for folk music.

Baratashvili Street is easily reached by walking over the bridge across the Kura River. The street is built up on one side with large modern structures and, on the other, which is the borderline of the Old Town, with old residential houses. In 1979 the fortress wall with round towers was cleared of later-date extensions, the street was broadened and then restored and modernized. Houses with balconies of different styles were built right on the remnants of the towers and parts of the walls. Restoration workers under the

guidance of architect Shota Kavlashvili ingenuously used the ancient subterranean premises with brick vaults to house tourist bureaus, coffee rooms, wine cellars. One of the houses is occupied by the **Puppet Theatre** with the Mukhrantubani restaurant next door, furnished in nineteenth-century style. At the end of the street there is a museum and a children's drawing school.

The narrow Shavteli Street, at one time Kala's main thoroughfare, leads from Baratashvili Street into the Old Town. Here stands the oldest church of Tbilisi, the **Anchiskhati Basilica.** Its name derives from an icon by the famous twelfth-century goldsmith Beka Opizari, brought here in the seventeenth century from the Anchi Monastery.

In the Old Town

The church, built in the sixth century, is a three-nave basilica with three pairs of columns. The apse, arches between the naves and open lunettes over the western and northern entrances are of horseshoe shape, characteristic of very early monuments. The façades and interior of the church still preserve masonry laid of large quadrae. A carved relief depicting a cross in a medallion on the western façade has also survived from the earliest part of the building.

The church has come down to this day rather modified. In the seventeenth century the upper parts of the buildings, the round columns and arches were laid in brick, instead of stone.

Kibalchich Rise. Restored area

A bell-tower was built in 1675 to the west of the basilica, much higher than its level, so that one has to descend into the courtyard by stairs arranged on its ground floor. The bell-tower appears as a brick cube. Decorative niches are arranged in two rows on both sides of the lancet arch of the passage, while above the arch a yellow plaque bears an inscription by Catholicos Domenti. On the first floor over the entrance are the living quarters. Since the bell-tower cannot be seen from the narrow street, the architect placed it northward with account of the street's perspective

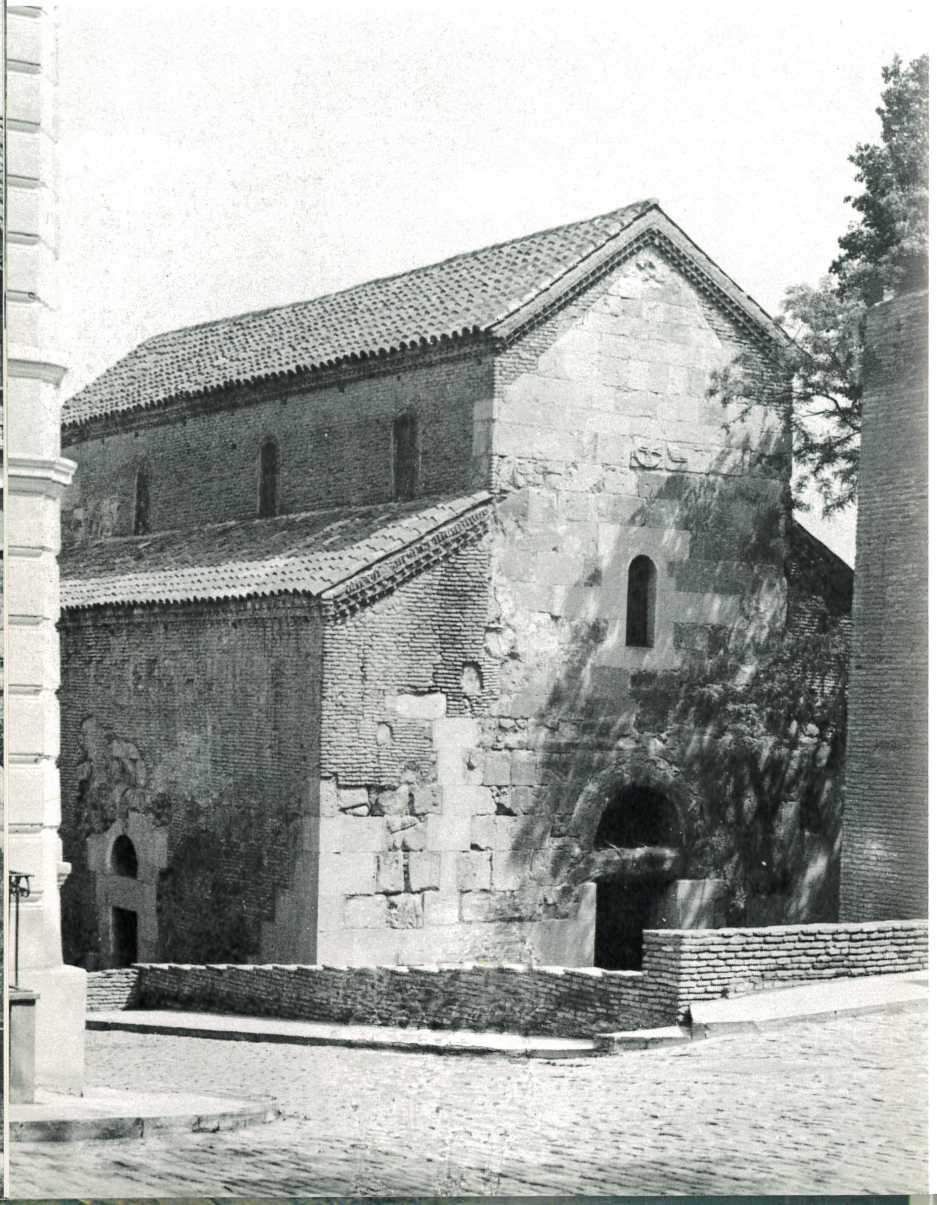
Mukhrantubani restaurant in Baratashvili Street

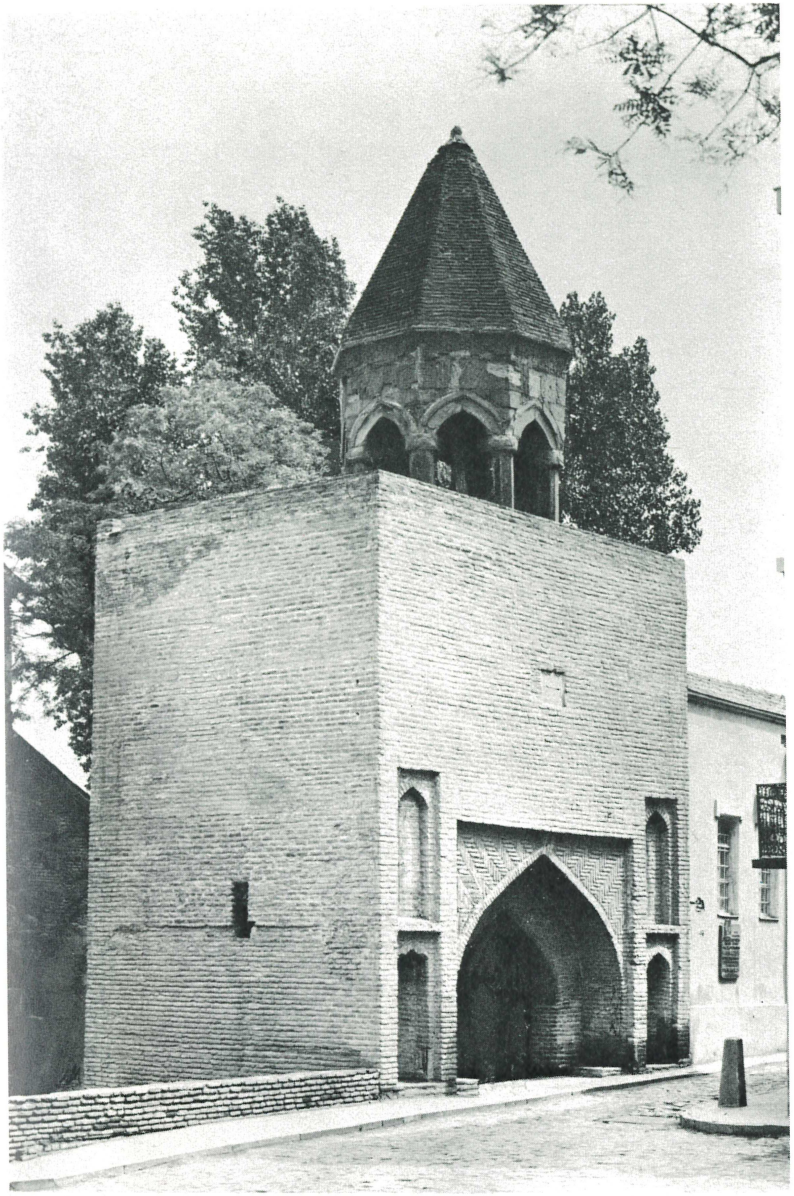
and the foreshortened view from the small square in front of the bell-tower.

At the end of Shavteli Street is the **Church Karis Ekklesia** (Court Church), built in 1710 on the site and with the stones of a ruined fifth-century church. In the early nineteenth century this church was repaired and considerably rebuilt in the style of Russian Classicism. On the western side of the church rises a bell-tower. Shavteli Street falls into the small Square of Erekle II. The eastern part of the square was occupied by the City Police Headquarters. Built in 1809 in the style of Russian Classicism, it was originally the

Baratashvili Street. Restored 19th-century houses along the fortress wall

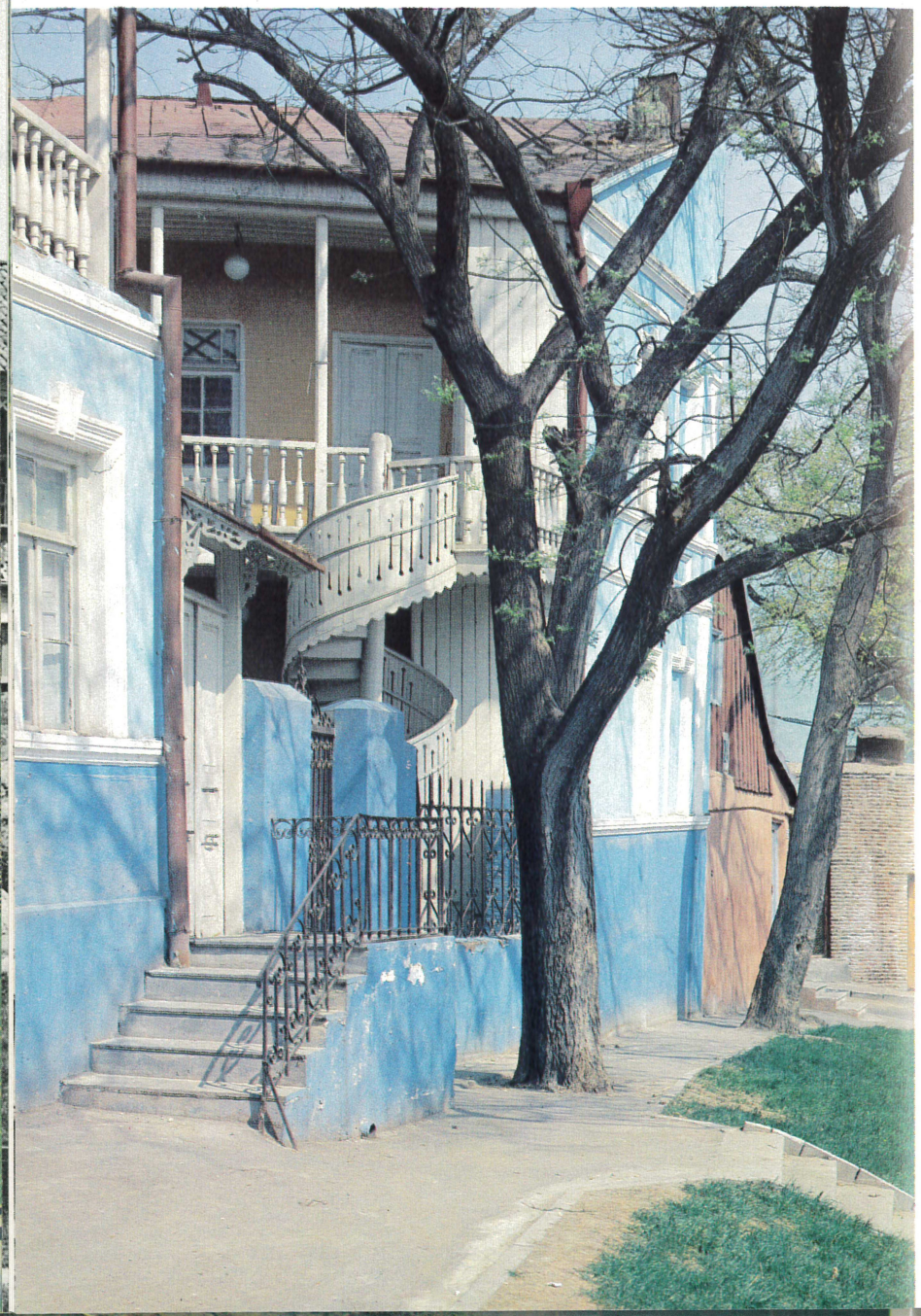
Anchiskhati Church in Shavteli Street. 6th century

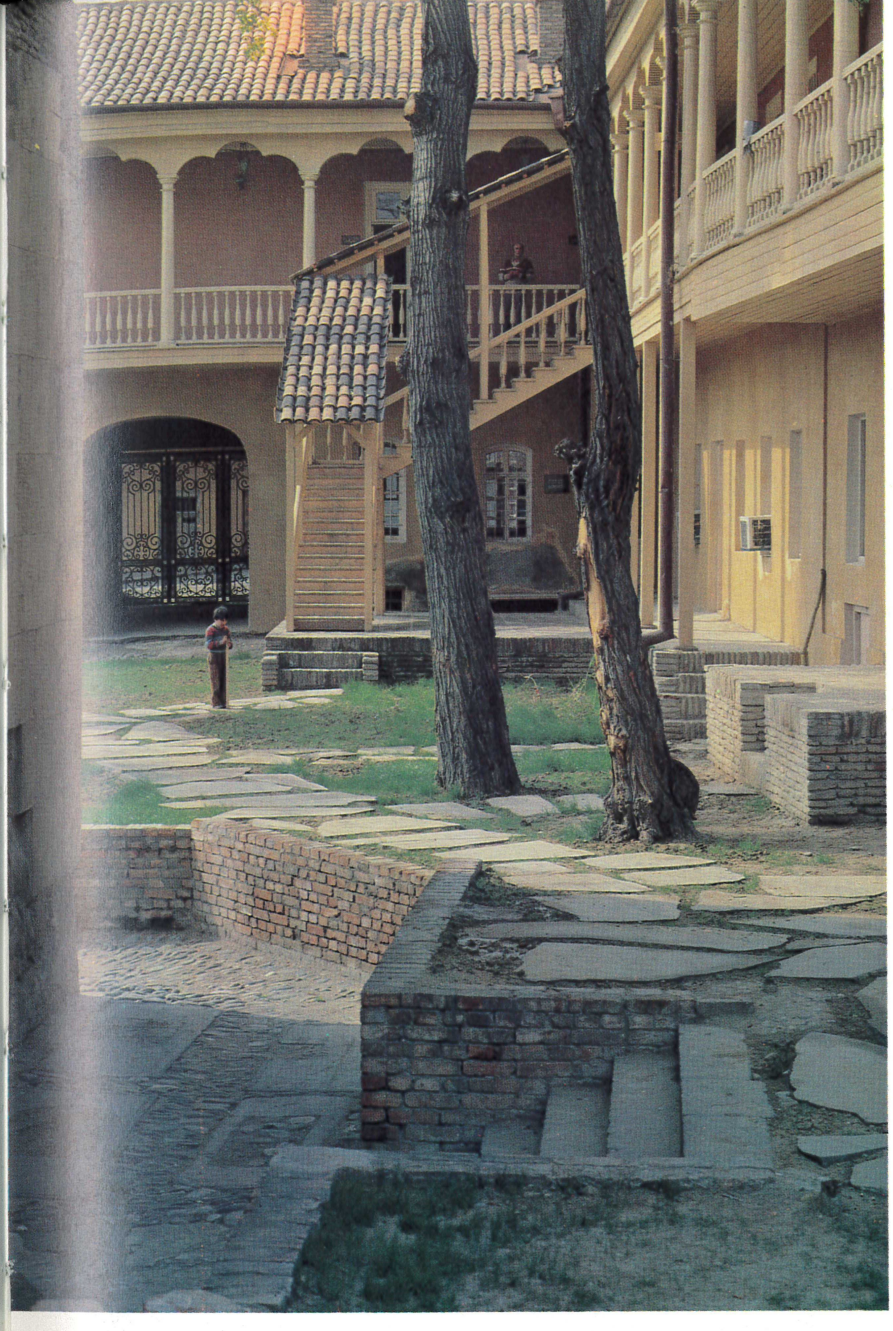




Anchiskhati bell-tower in Shavteli Street. 1675

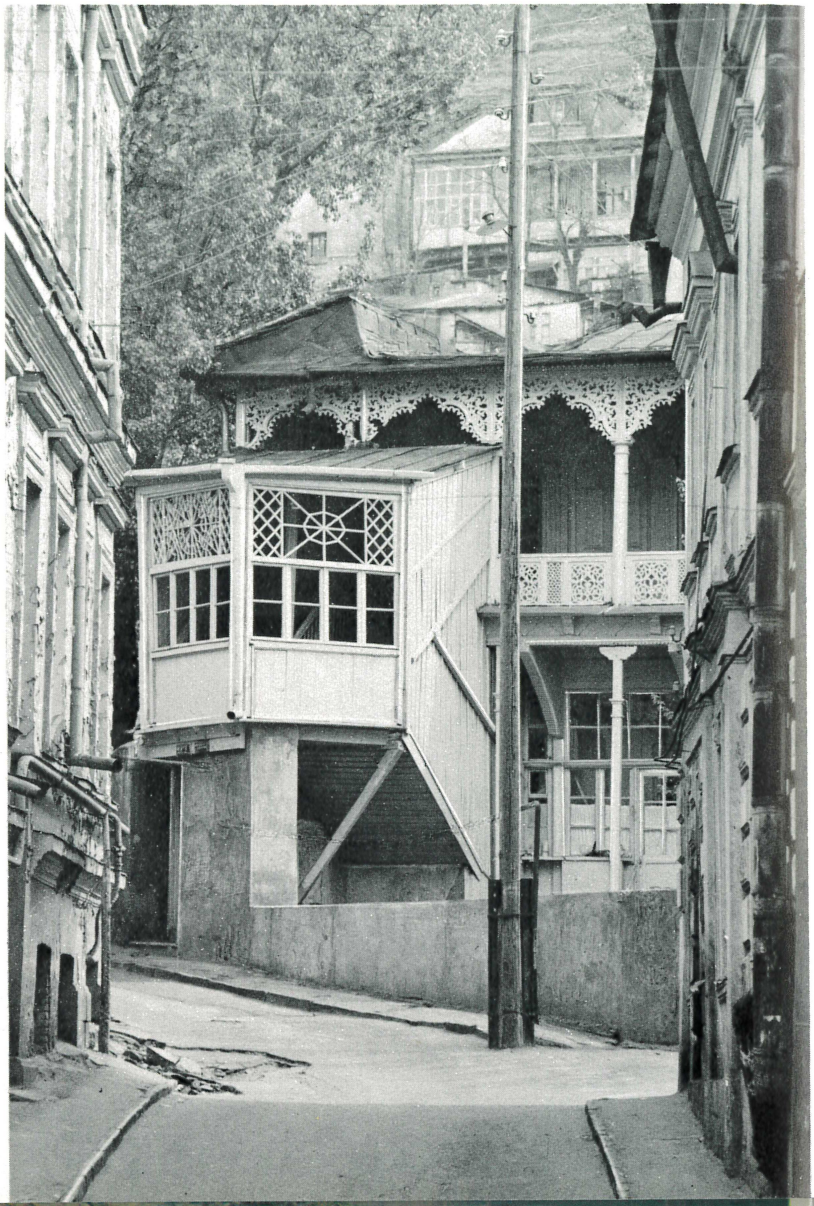
19th-century house in Shavteli Street





Courtyard of a dwelling house in Shavteli Street. 19th century. Headquartered here is the Society for the Preservation of Georgia's Cultural Monuments

A nook in the Old Town



Residential house in Erekle II Square, built on the site of King Simeon's palace (now the premises of the House of Theatre, Music and Cinematography)

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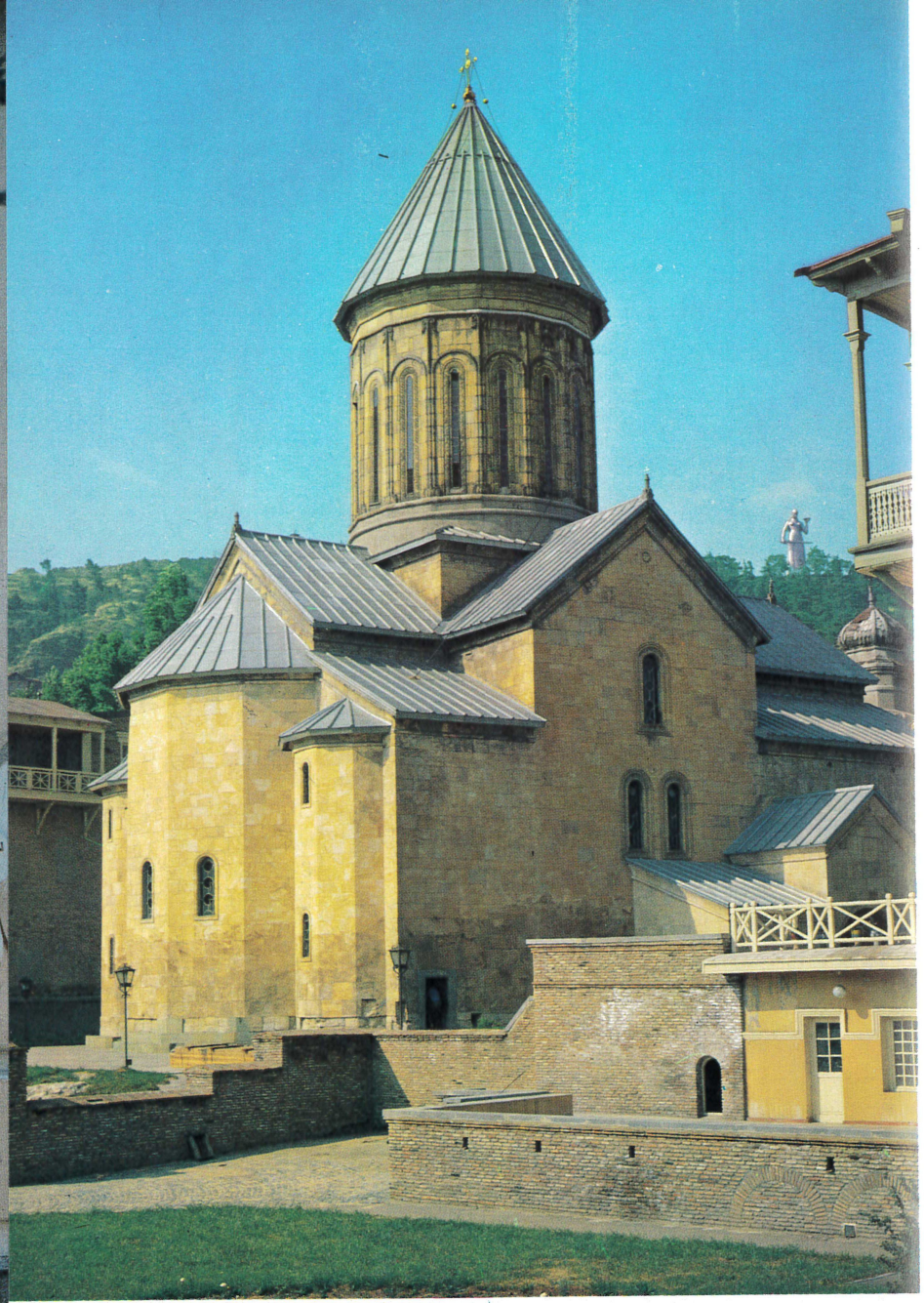
Wadding and Chardin Streets in the Old Town after reconstruction

residence of the governor. Nearby is a brick bathhouse. This is the only structure remaining from the magnificent palace of King Rostom, razed to the ground in 1795.

At the end of Shavteli Street stands a two-storey residential building with a five-span loggia in the centre of the ground floor, and a wooden balcony above it. Put up for Georgia's last monarch King Giorgi XII as his residence, it now houses the **Georgian Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematography.**

Not far from the square in Sioni Street stands the **Sioni Cathedral,** distinguished for its proportions and high dome. It is a typical specimen of Georgian medieval architecture, an edifice completed in the early seventh century. The decor of this structure with a centrally placed dome is severe and restrained. The cathedral is faced with golden-coloured stone; extant in its southern chapel are portions of a portico (12th—13th centuries). The cathedral shared the fate of Tbilisi: it was repeatedly destroyed by foreign conquerors. Building inscriptions found on the walls point to some restorative work. In the mid-nineteenth century the interior was painted under the guidance of the artist Grigori Gagarin. At present the cathedral serves as the residence of the Catholicos, Head of the Georgian church. Beside the cathedral is a small bell-tower dating from 1425. The spire-topped three-tier bell-tower rising in front of the cathedral was erected in 1812 to a design sent from St Petersburg. The original colonnade of the Tuscan order in the lower tier, and

Chardin Street in the Old Town after reconstruction



Sioni Cathedral in Sioni Street. Founded in the 6th century. Reconstructed in the 13th century, 1657 and 1710

19th-century residential houses along the Embankment after reconstruction

the division of the second tier with Ionic pilasters are stylistic elements of Russian Classicism.

Caravanserais were always important to a city that was a bustling trade centre. In the middle of the last century there were thirteen, of which only three survive: the three-storey structure opposite the Sioni Cathedral known as the Caravanserai Tekle (named after the daughter of King Erekle II), another in Sioni Street restored in the eighteenth century, and the third — a two-storey building in Erekle II Street. All these buildings have the same structure with premises situated on two or three storeys surrounding an open courtyard, the upper storeys, with their rooms for visitors, opening onto a gallery, the lower storeys incorporating stores and warehouses. The warehouses were

Caravanserai in Sioni Street

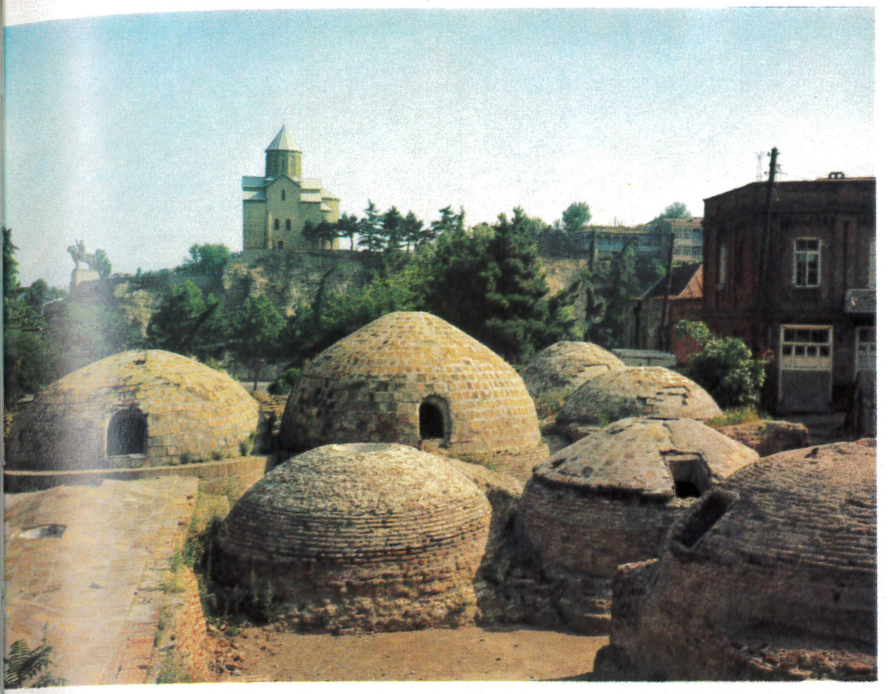
also situated in vast cellars. Notably, the structure of the Tbilisi caravanserais anticipated the inns that appeared in our time.

Sioni Street leads to **Vakhtang Gorgasali Square,** the site of Sunday bazaars which attracted traders and buyers from all parts of Georgia as well as foreigners.

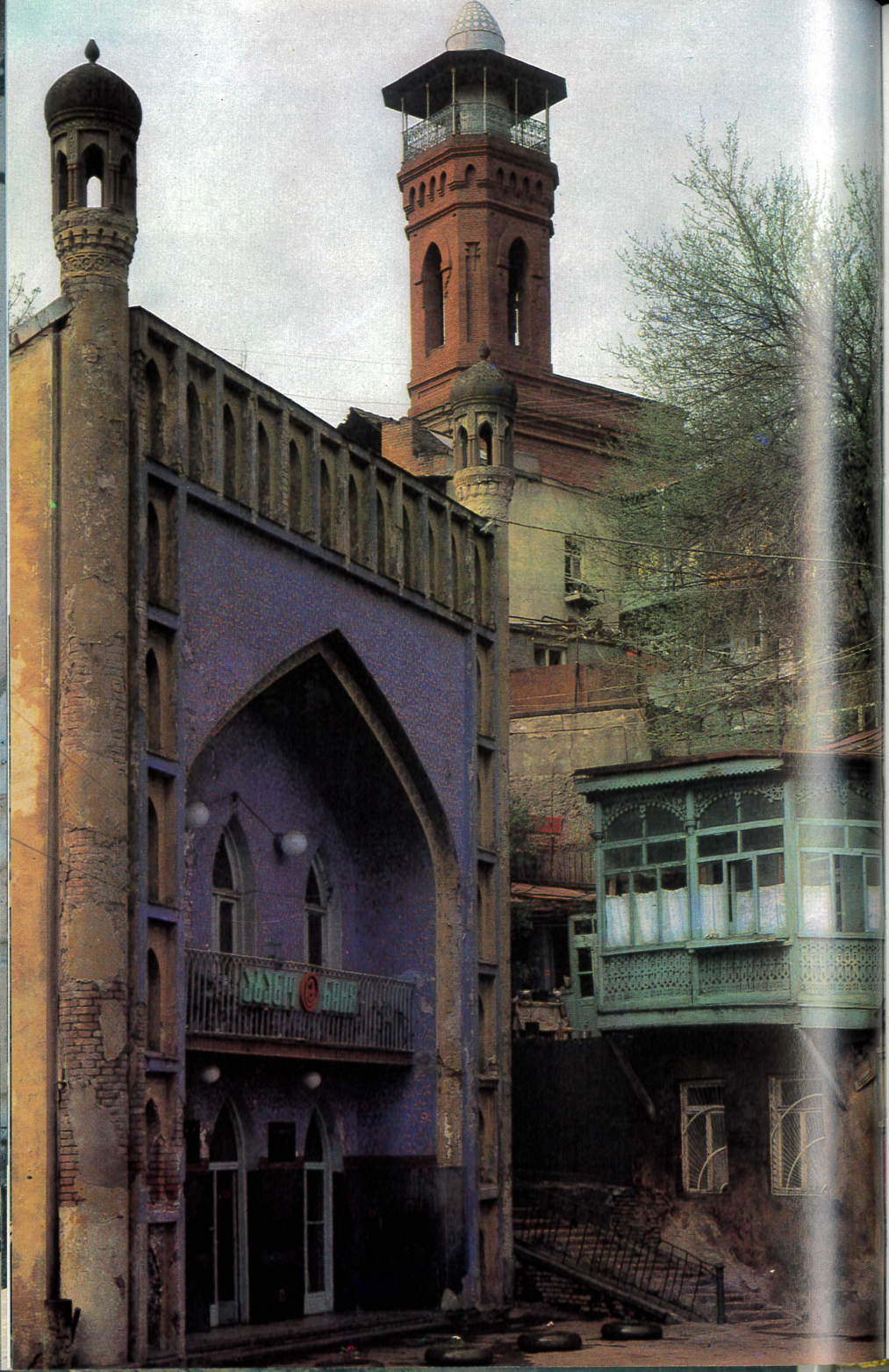
To the left of the square one can see the domes of the famous Tbilisi sulphur baths. According to historians, already in the twelfth century Tbilisi had sixty-eight bathhouses which used natural hotwater springs. However, by the seventeenth century only six of them remained. The Erekle Bathhouse, the oldest of them all, adjoins the fortress wall. Situated opposite, on the right bank of the Tsavkisistskali River is the Sumbatov Bathhouse, built in the

Grigori Gagarin (1810—1893).
Chief Market Square of the Old Town in the Mid-19th century

Church of Jvaris-mama. 16th century



Domes of the sulphur baths in Bath Street. 17th—18th centuries



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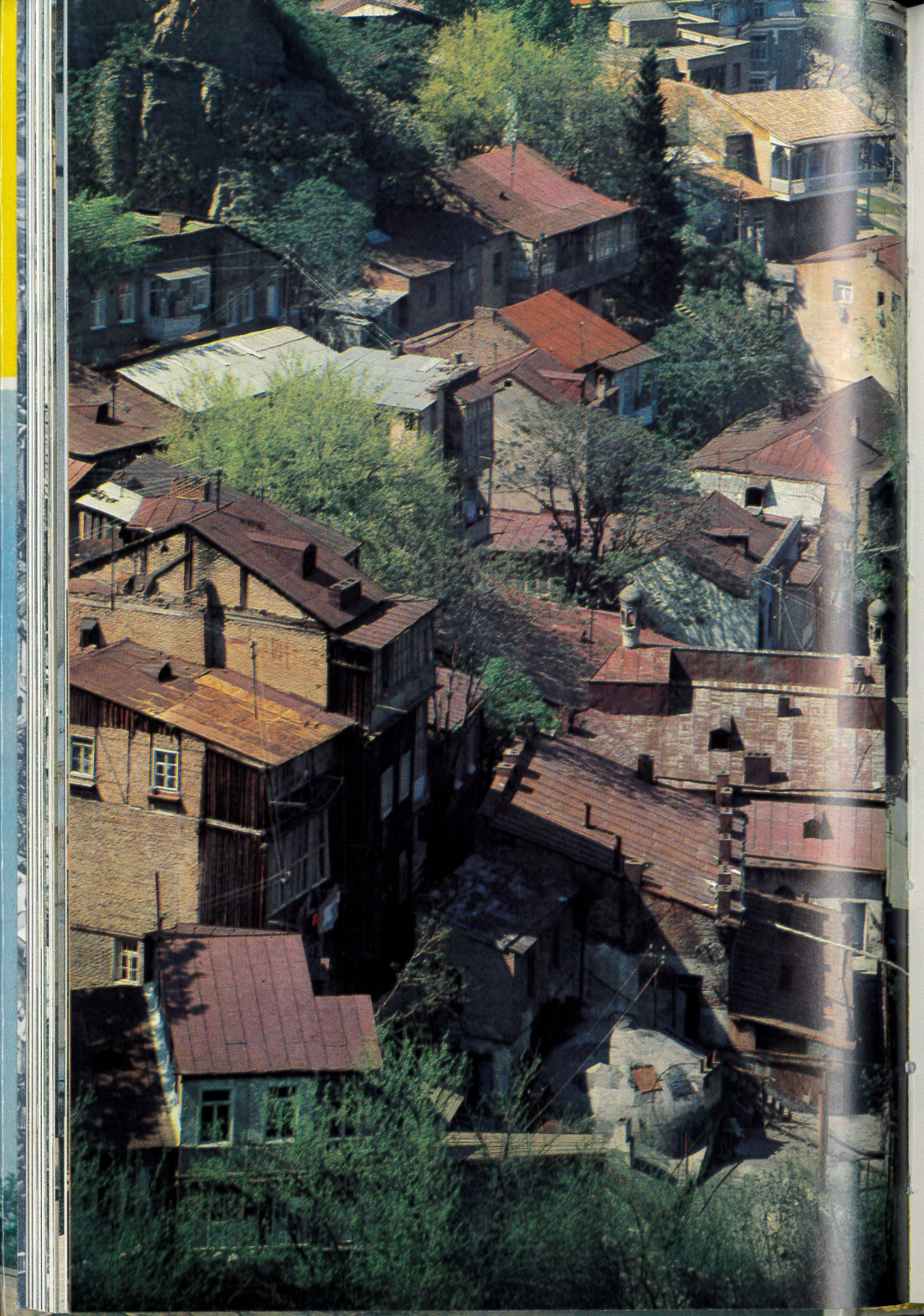
Chreli abano (Motley-coloured bath) in Bath Street. 17th century.
The main façade built in the late 19th century

Statue of Niko Pirosmani (1862—1918) in the garden by the sulphur baths. 1975.
Sculptor Elguja Amashukeli (*b.* 1928), architect Nodar Mgaloblishvili (*b.* 1927)



seventeenth century. Situated in Akhundov Street are the Bebutov Baths and public baths of the eighteenth century. The rows of bathhouses end with the Orbeliani Baths, or *Chrel iabano* (Motley-coloured bath), whose façade in the form of a lancet portico flanked by small minarets is adorned with brightly coloured tiles. All the bathrooms and spacious vestibules are below ground level. They are surmounted by domes protruding above the flat roofs and are lighted through their lanterns. The rooms are faced with dressed stone or marble, and the vaults and walls are painted. Deep niches are arranged over the pools and stone benches run along the walls.

In the bathhouses the residents of Tbilisi took medical treatment, spent their leisure time, made business appointments. On specially scheduled days (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) the vast halls and dressing-rooms were thronged with ladies parading in all their finery, while match-makers arranged for the inspection of prospective brides. Large-scale restoration work is now under way aimed at giving the Tbilisi bathhouses their original aspect.

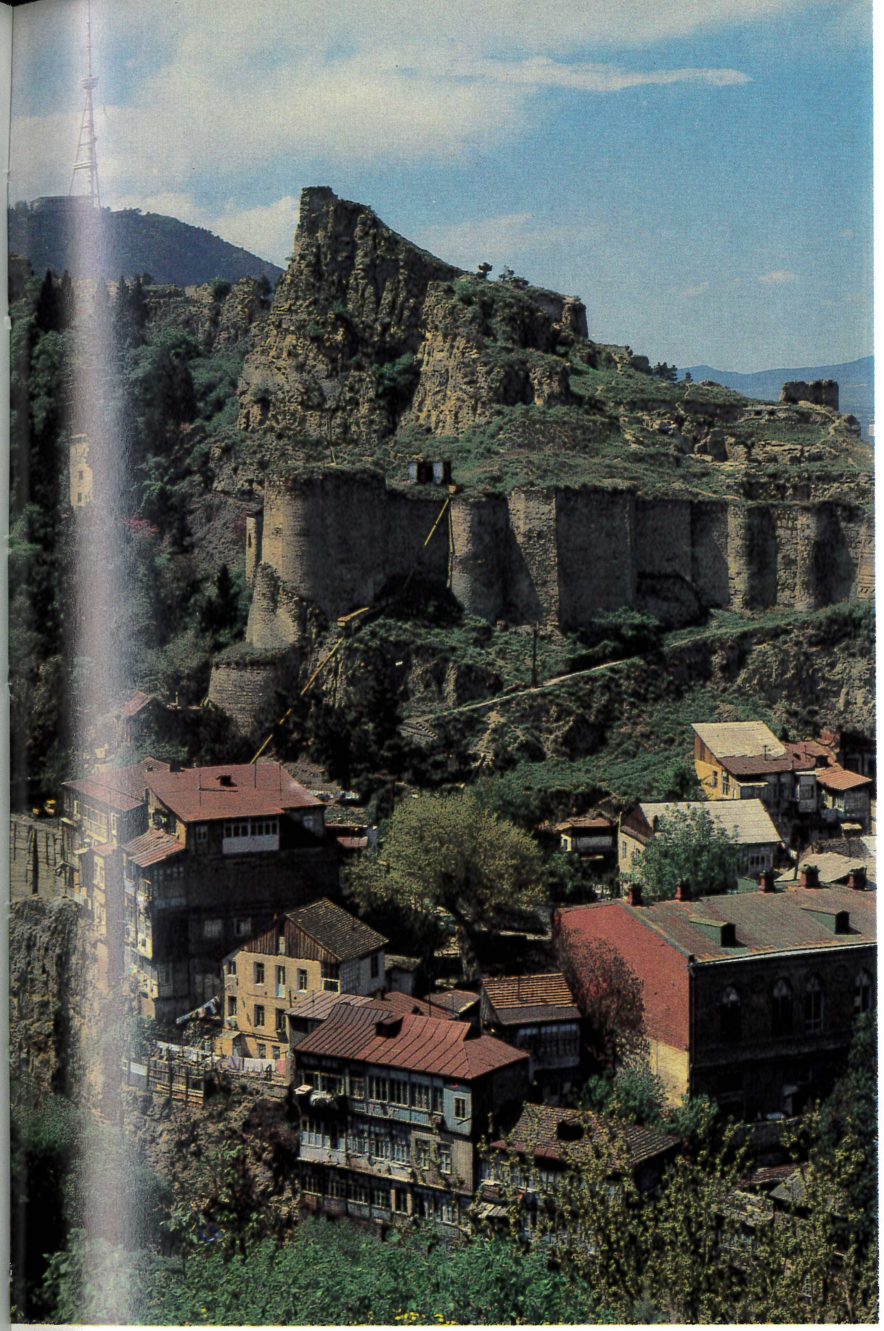
In a garden not far from Vakhtang Gorgasali Square stands a **statue of Niko Pirosmani** — a self-taught painter of the late nineteenth century (1975, sculptor Elguja Amashukeli, architect Nodar Mgaloblishvili). Here begin the Ortachala Gardens, with their taverns and wine cellars, where in his lifetime the now famous painter used to wander. The painter's figure, kneeling on a low podium, is pressing a lamb to

Part of the Old Town at the foot of the Narikala Fortress

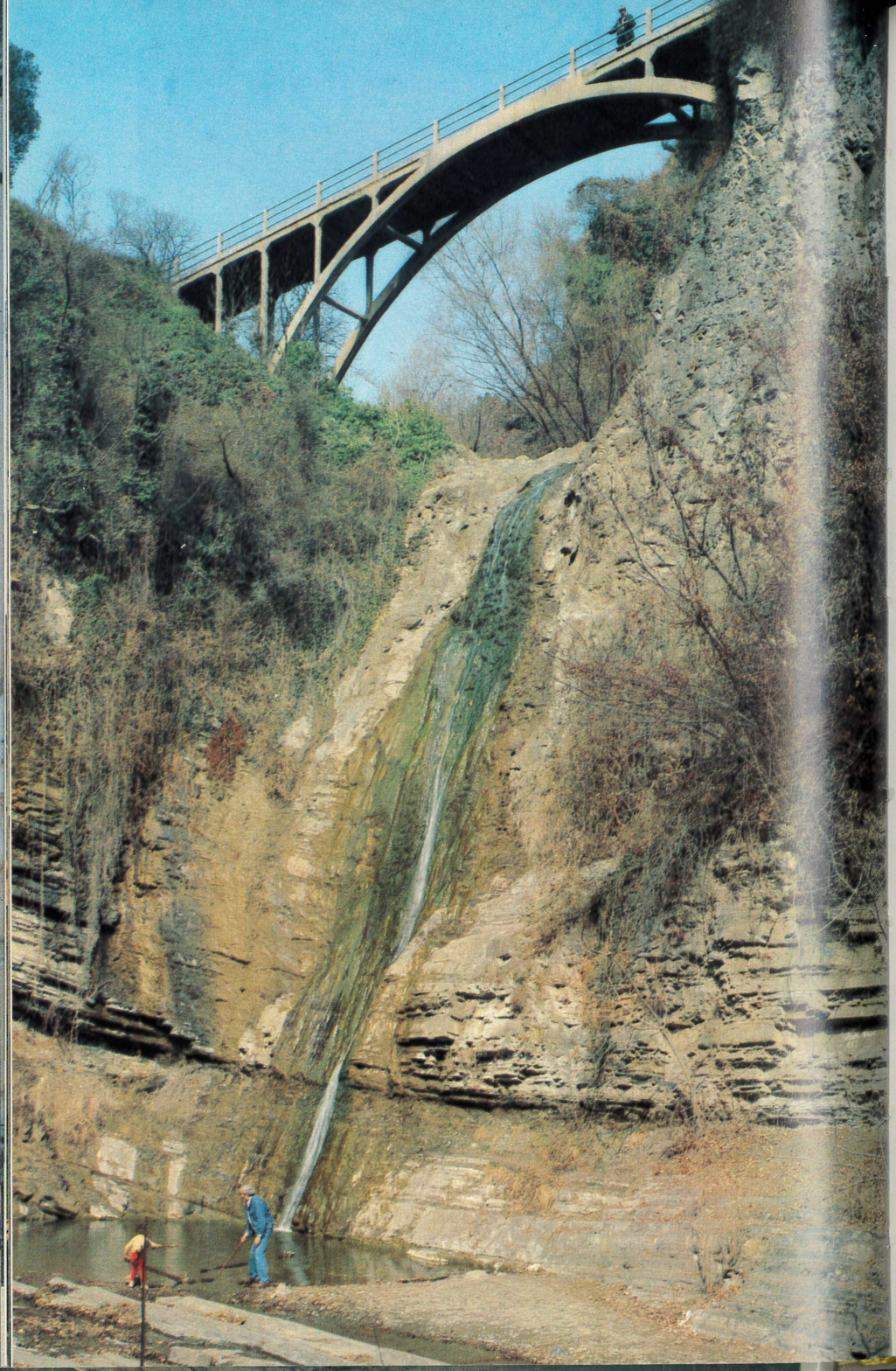
his breast. The sculpture reflects the rich spiritual world of the wise and childishly naive master, his concern for the weak and helpless.

By taking the Botanical Road we may climb from the bathhouse district to the ruins of the Narikala Fortress (its name means 'impregnable' or 'little'). It dominates the Old Town and is its most imposing architectural landmark. Back in the fourth century a complex system of forts was built here. Occupying an advantageous strategic position over the narrowest spot of the Kura River's canyon, they overlooked the important trade route passing here. The chief contours of the fortress took shape apparently by the thirteenth century. Most of the structures were built of brick and unhewn stone. A tower of dressed stone in the north-eastern corner can be dated — judging by its remains — to the fifth century, the time of Vakhtang Gorgasali's reign. The fortress was surrounded by a double ring of walls, the traces of the front one surviving on the eastern side. Here also was a vaulted entrance. Two underground passages led to the Kura and to the Tsavkisis-tskali. From springs in the vicinity of the Okrokana village a canal and aqueduct supplied the fortress with water. Excavations uncovered the remains of a large thirteenth-century church in the lower part of the fortress.

In the seventeenth century the royal palace was located in Narikala. Surviving from that period are towers with a lozenge pattern of masonry. In 1827 the fortress was damaged by a heavy earthquake.



Narikala Fortress



In the Botanical Gardens

At the foot of Narikala beyond the Solalaki ridge, the **Central Botanical Gardens** sprawl over an area of 130 hectares. They were laid out in 1845, on the basis of the four-centuries-old gardens of the Georgian royal house. Their collection numbers some 4,900 species of flora from Georgia, the Mediterranean, the Himalayas, China, Japan, North America and other parts of the world.

From Narikala the fortress wall stretched to the advanced Shahis-takhti fort. In 1935 a walk was laid along this line and named after the Young Communist League. This walk terminates at the majestic **statue of Mother Georgia (Kartlis deda)** erected in 1958 (sculptor Elguja Amashukeli), which has since virtually been a kind of Tbilisi's emblem. Rendered in a restrained and generalized manner, it is a twenty-metre-high figure of a woman in Georgian national dress, holding a bowl of wine in one hand and a sword in the other. It is meant to symbolize a people welcoming friends with wine but meeting foes with the sword.

Beside the statue is the **Grishashvili Museum of the History and Ethnography of Tbilisi.** Its stocks total more than 44,000 exhibits consisting of archaeological finds: utensils, tools, and also documents describing the city's past history, present development and plans for the future.

Another interesting spot in the Old Town is the ancient quarter of Kala, which is called Kldisubani (the hilly district). The cobbled streets and blind alleys, the small courtyards surrounded on three sides

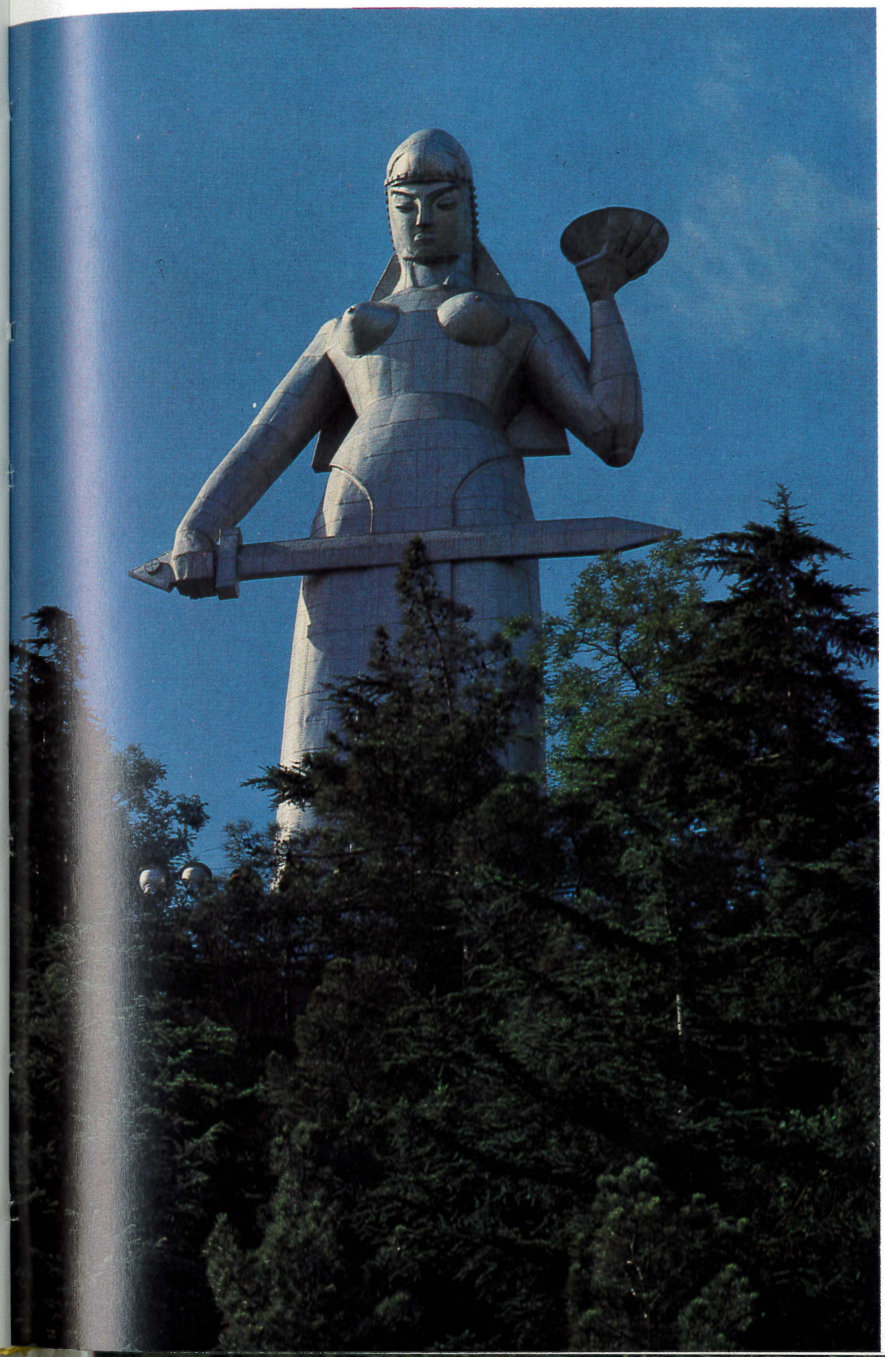
with balconies, the domes of the churches create the atmosphere of a medieval town.

Running upwards from the small **Khlebnaya** (Bread) **Square** is Azizbekov Street lined with numerous houses built in the early nineteenth century. An original house of that period at the beginning of the street features carved balcony railings, columns with intricately worked arch finials, glazed lateral galleries with oriental-type latticework and outside stairs. The building at the end corner of the street displays a balcony typical of Tbilisi houses.

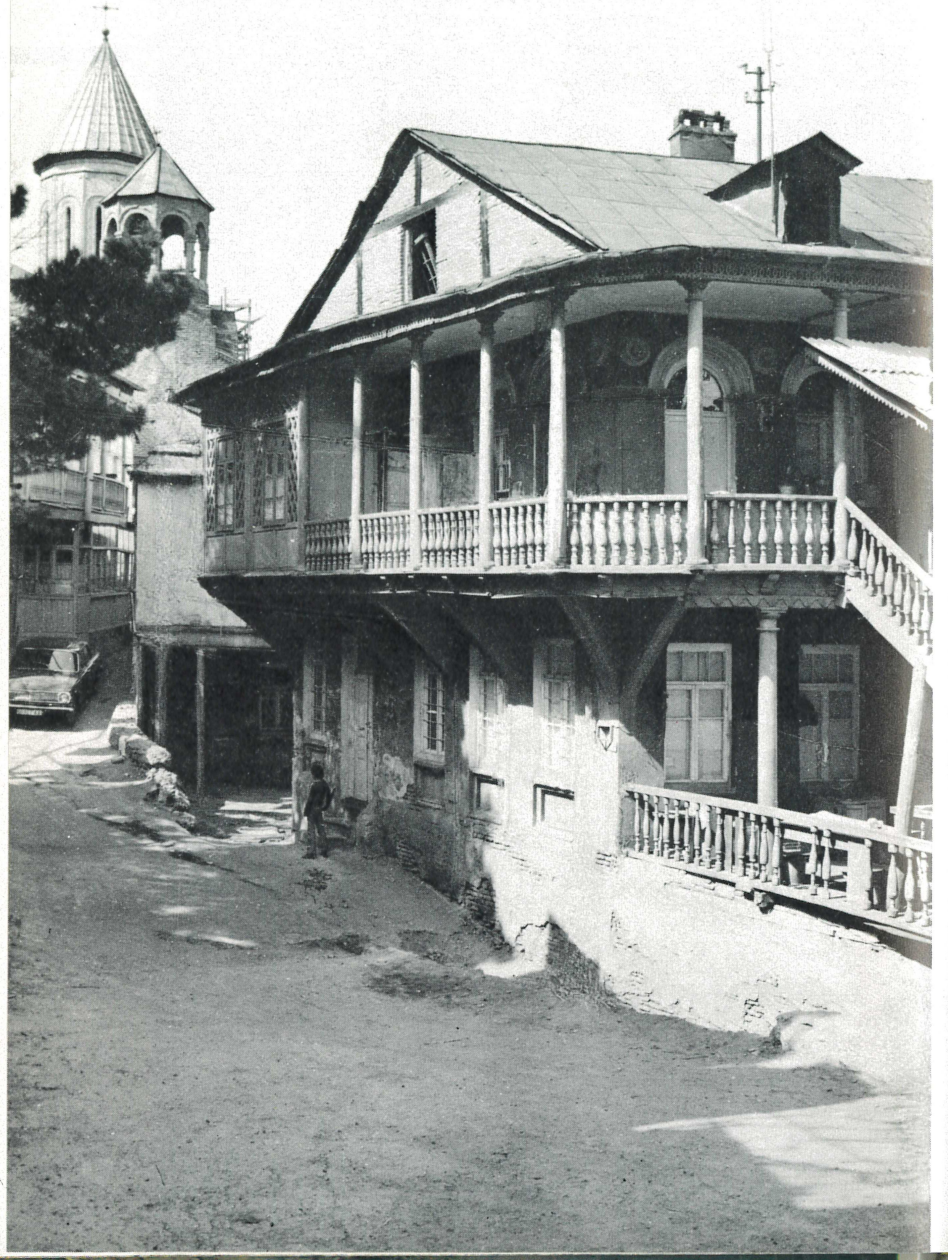
Noteworthy in Gomi Street starting immediately after Azizbekov Street are a house with a small balcony and mezzanine, a two-storey house with a broad balcony and a complex system of passages (such as are still found in a number of buildings) with galleries glazed with stained glass in floral patterns. Narrow steps cut in the rock lead us up to a square brick structure with a lancet entrance called the Ateshga (Fire-Worshippers' temple). According to legend, the Turks had built here a mosque which was demolished in 1795. The Ateshga, still carrying its ancient name, may well be its remains.

Gomi Street ends in a sixteenth-century bell-tower typical of the Georgian architecture of that period. The bell-tower belongs to the nearby large **Bethlehem Church.** It was built in 1740 on the site of an old church and is faced with dressed stone. The sparing ornamentation is characteristic of eighteenth-century Georgian architecture.

Statue of Mother Georgia at the end of Komsomol Walk. 1958. Sculptor Elguja Amashukeli (*b.* 1928)



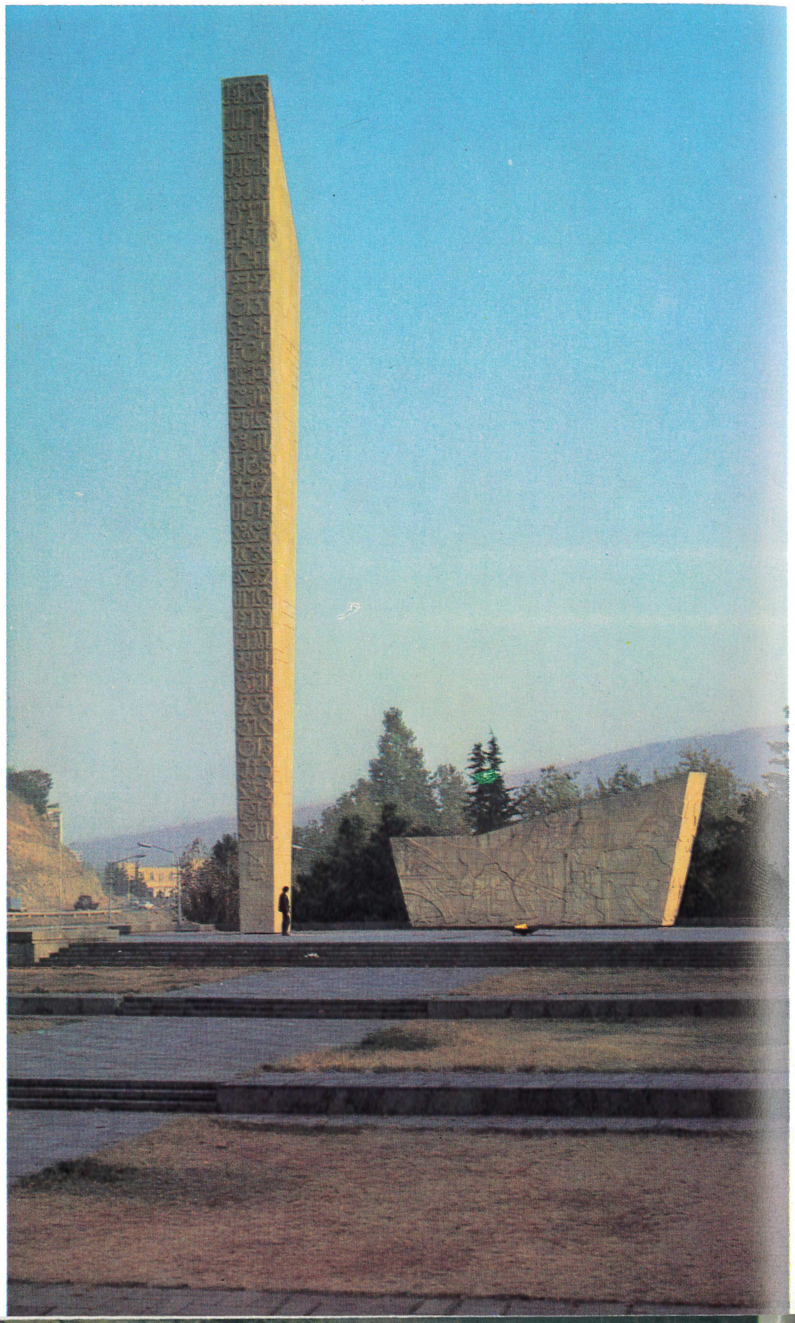
Residential house in Gomi Street.
19th century. In the distance,
the Bethlehem Church



A sweeping panorama of the city opens up from the platform in front of the church. From here visitors may descend down a peculiar stepped street (1850, architect Timothy Beloi) to the small **Alaverdov Square** and inspect one of the most characteristic Tbilisi houses of the early nineteenth century. Facing the street are not only its balconies, but its courtyard as well. The façades and the house as a whole are rendered in a classicist style and reveal the hand of a professional. But the wooden columns, balusters, intricate glazing, richly ornamented banisters and arches between the columns, the graceful fine two-storey-high columns in the yards, are all attuned to the conditions and traditions of southern architecture.

Residential house in Alaverdov Square.
19th century

Memorial to the 300 Aragvians in Gorgasali Street. 1961. Architect Alexander Bakradze (*b.* 1925)



Quite near Alaverdov Square in Akhospireli Street is the **Museum of Georgian Folk and Applied Art,** which contains rich collections of articles and utensils made of wood, stone, metal and bone, pottery, carpets and embroideries.

In Gorgasali Street stands a **Memorial to the 300 Aragvians** — warrior hillmen from the banks of the Aragvi River who in 1795 rose to defend the city against the hordes of Agha Muhammad Khan and died fighting against superior numbers (1961, architect Alexander Bakradze). The monument has

Memorial Machabeli Wall in Gorgasali Street. 1967. Sculptor Teimuraz Chkonia (*b.* 1927), architect Nodar Mgaloblishvili (*b.* 1927)

been erected not far from the site of the battle, where the graves of the city's defenders were discovered in a small park on the Kura River embankment. A 23-metre-high obelisk faced with white stone and a huge monolith lying on the ground are covered with reliefs and inscriptions honouring the feat of the warriors. In the Battle of Krtsanisi heroism was displayed also by the citizens of Tbilisi led by the actor David Machabeli. Their valour is commemorated by the white-stone **Machabeli Wall** (1967, sculptor Teimuraz Chkonia, architect Nodar Mgaloblishvili), situated just opposite the Aragvian Memorial. Carved out on one side

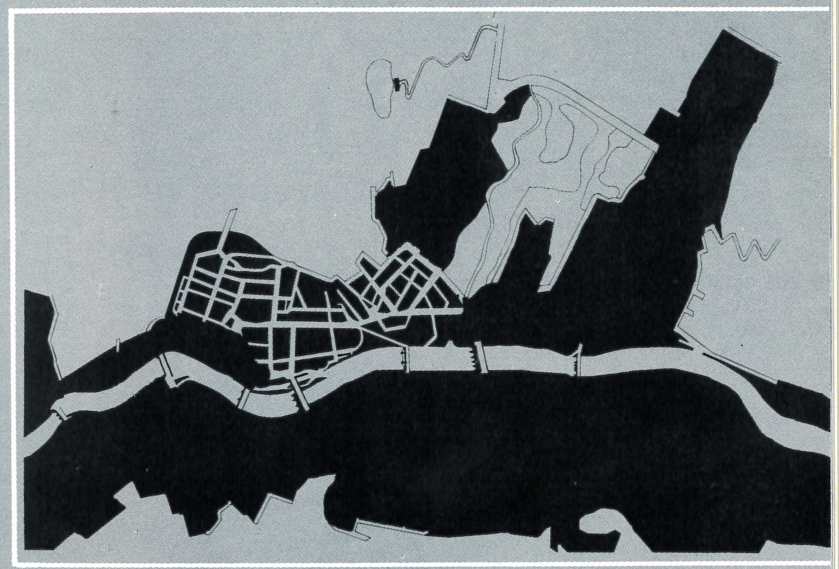
Zurab Tsereteli (*b.* 1934). Mosaic panel on the wall of the bus terminal building. 1973

Monument to Piotr Bagrationi (1765—1812). 1984. Sculptor Merab Merabishvili (*b.* 1931), architect Nodar Mgaloblishvili (*b.* 1927)

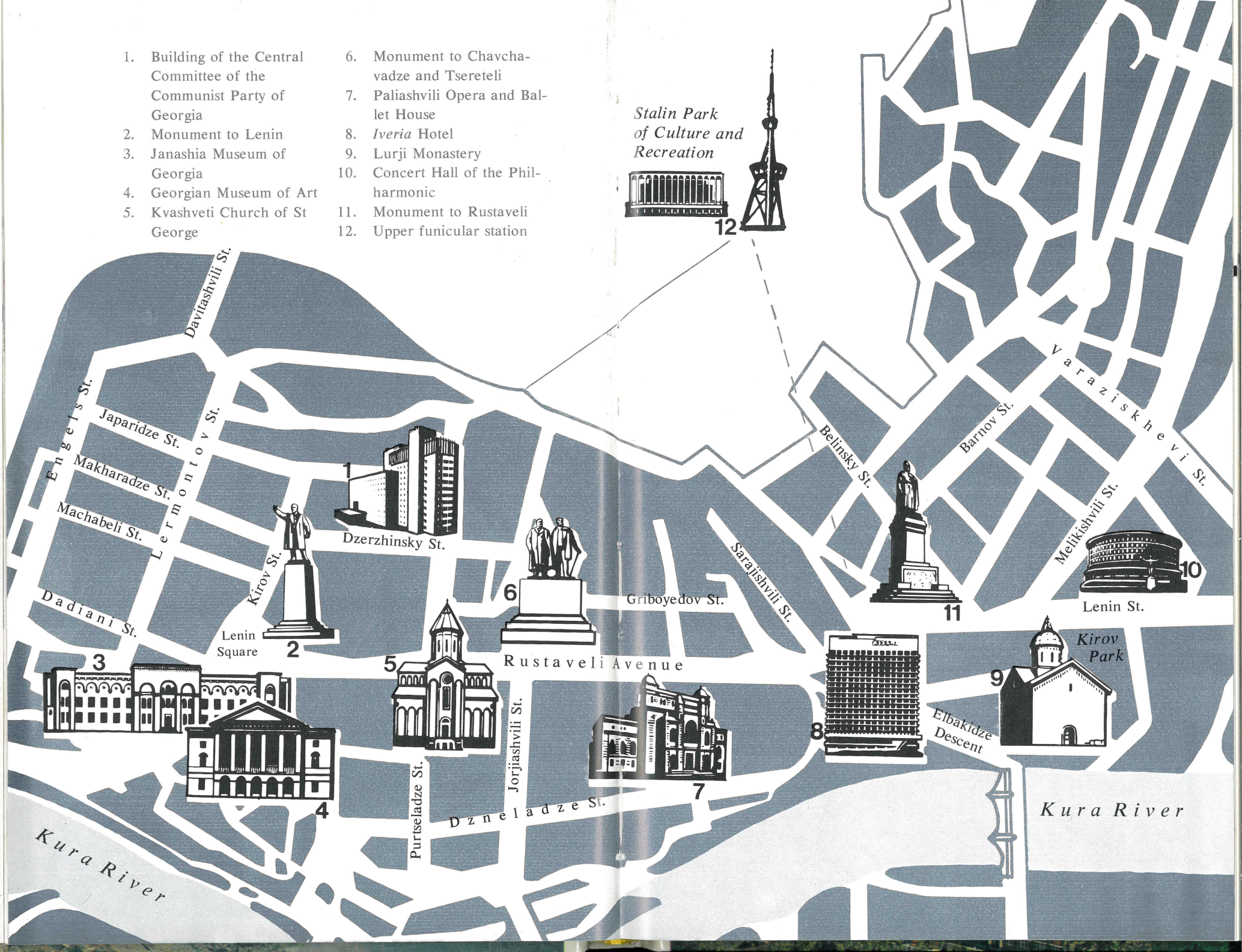
is the head of a warrior with a sword and shield and the verse by Shota Rustaveli: *Better death but death with glory, than inglorious life in shame*. The other side bears the high-relief images of the undaunted irregulars.

Gorgasali Street leads up to a new bridge with a bus terminal built nearby (1973, architects Shota Kavlashvili, Romaz Kiknadze, Vladimir Kurtishvili). Its main façade features a mosaic panel by the artist Zurab Tsereteli (1973).

The City Centre



1. Building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia
2. Monument to Lenin
3. Janashia Museum of Georgia
4. Georgian Museum of Art
5. Kvashveti Church of St George
6. Monument to Chavchavadze and Tsereteli
7. Paliashvili Opera and Ballet House
8. *Iveria* Hotel
9. Lurji Monastery
10. Concert Hall of the Philharmonic
11. Monument to Rustaveli
12. Upper funicular station



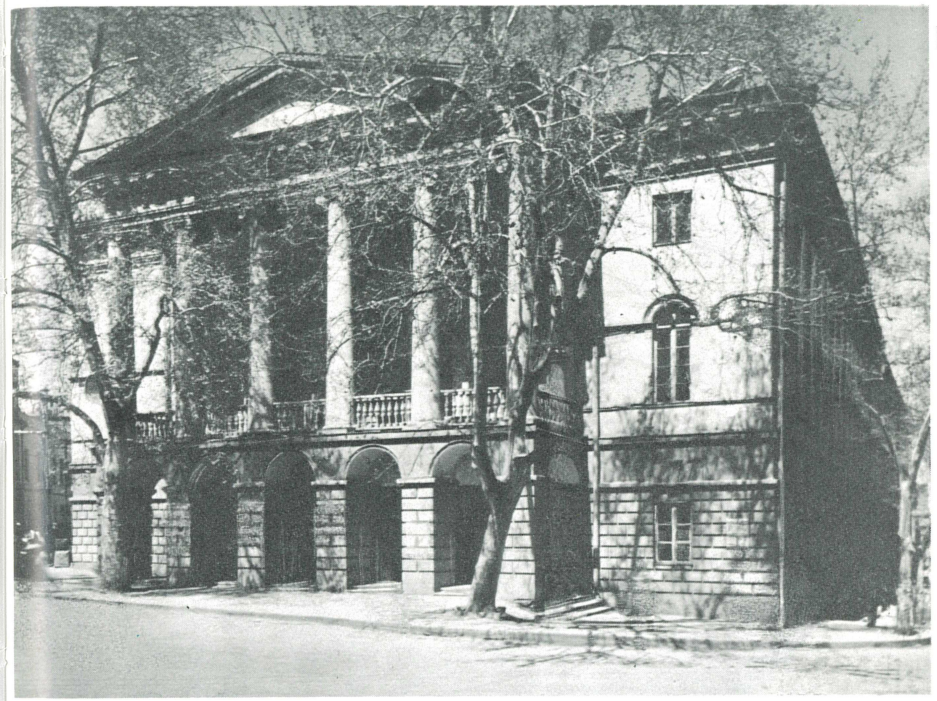
Lenin Square, the main square of Tbilisi, took shape during the nineteenth century. It constitutes a link between the old and the new town. From here the city began to develop upstream along the river. Rising in the centre of the square is a **monument to Lenin** (1956, sculptor Valentin Topuridze, architects Shota Kavlashvili, Givi Melkadze, Constantine Chkheidze, Gera Khechumov). The building of the former headquarters of the Caucasian Army, put up in 1824 in the style of Late Russian Classicism, came down to our time without alterations. The building housing the **Executive Committee of the Tbilisi City Council of People's Deputies** (1882, architect Paul Stern) is an instance of the pseudo-Moorish style. In 1835 a hotel was built on this square.

The unadorned lateral façades of the three-storey building line Pushkin and Ketskhoveli Streets, with the main façade overlooking the square. Erected over the rusticated arcade of the ground floor is a two-tier Ionic hexastyle portico crowned with a pediment.

← Lenin Square

Since 1952 the building houses the **Georgian Museum of Art.** Its rich collections include numerous works of Georgian, Russian, European and Oriental art. Russian art is represented by painters of the eighteenth to the early twentieth century such as Ivan Nikitin, Dmitry Levitsky, Fiodor Rokotov, Vasily Tropinin, Karl Briullov, Ivan Kramskoi, Ilya Repin, Ivan Aivazovsky, Vasily Surikov, Valentin Serov, Mikhail Vrubel, etc.

The collection of Western European painting boasts a fourteenth-century triptych by Bernardo Daddi, a polyptych by Paolo Veneziano, *Landscape*



Georgian Museum of Art. Entrance

Exaltation of the Cross. Relief on the Jvari Church at Mtskheta. 6th century

Relief on the altar screen from the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin at Sapara. 11th century. Georgian Museum of Art

with a Waterfall by Jacob van Ruisdael, *The Procuress* by Lucas Cranach and *The Archangel Michael* by Guido Reni.

It is quite understandable that the museum exposition is devoted mainly to Georgian art, reflecting its development from the early Middle Ages to our days.

Architecture has always occupied a leading place among the arts in Georgia, which is why considerable space is allotted to it in the museum exposition. There are numerous details of architectural structures, models, photographs and drawings that give a vivid idea of such monuments as the churches at Bolnisi, Sioni, Jvari, Oshki, the Church of Bagrat, the churches at Alaverdi, Sveti-Tskhoveli, Ghelati and others. In the Middle Ages architecture was organically linked with monumental painting and sculpture. Noteworthy in the display are fragments of mosaics depicting a triton, fishes and a dolphin found on the site of a Roman castle dating from the second — third centuries A.D. and, of course, fragments of the mosaic floor from a temple at Pitsunda, uncovered during archaeological excavations in 1952.

The development of sculpture in medieval Georgia can be traced in reliefs with figure representations from the walls of churches, altar screens and stelae. On the most ancient of them (5th century), in the Sion Cathedral at Bolnisi, the representations of animals and plants are creatively transformed to incorporate motifs of local folk art. Reliefs from the late sixth-century church at Jvari retain plasticity of form inher-

The Archangel Gabriel. Fresco of the altar apse in the Sioni Church at Ateni. Second half of the 11th century. Copy by Tatyana Sheviakova. Georgian Museum of Art

St Mamai Riding a Lion. Tondo.
11th century. Georgian Museum of Art

Gold pectoral cross of Queen Tamar.
1186—1206. Georgian Museum of Art

Processional cross from Ishkhani. 973.
Georgian Museum of Art

ited from Hellenism, while displaying a linearity characteristic of Georgian art. Further on we see the replacement of three-dimensional by two-dimensional form with increasing expressiveness (Opiza, 9th c.; Usaneti, 8th—9th c.). Tenth-century reliefs (Tbeti, Kumurdo) have a well-articulated volumetric form without that plastic elaboration of details which was very widely practised in the eleventh century (Sveti-Tskhoveli, 1010—1029; Samtavisi, 1030; Nikortsminda, 1010—1014).

The gradual development of sculpture in the round began in the tenth century reaching perfection, in the next, in conveying the plastic quality of the human figure. This was the result of an increased interest in the personality as a feature of public life in Georgia in the eleventh — thirteenth centuries. In the twelfth and thir-

The Virgin of Khakhuli. Triptych.
10th—12th centuries. Georgian Museum of Art

teenth centuries ornamental carving grew in importance to a degree whereby it all but completely superseded sculpture on religious subjects.

Medieval monumental painting is represented in Georgia chiefly by copies; most noteworthy among them are copies of the murals from David-Gareja, Ubisi, Tsalenjikhi, Kintsvisi, Iprari and other places.

The museum also has on display magnificent reliefs on tenth-eleventh-century altar screens (Ateni, Shiomghvime, Sapara).

Silver-gilt triptych from Anchiskhati.
The frame by Beka Opizari. 12th century.
Georgian Museum of Art

The museum's treasury contains first-class specimens of Georgian chasing from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. The bulk of this display consists of *repoussé* work which is part of the treasure-trough of medieval culture. Most of the objects were intended for religious purposes and include icons, crosses, gold and silver chalices richly adorned with ornamentation, enamel insets and jewels.

The pride of the collection is the famous twelfth-century Khakhuli triptych incorporating a large tenth-century icon of the Virgin rendered in the *cloisonné* enamel technique. The entire surface of the triptych is covered with a fanciful ornament and enlivened with glowing jewels. In 1979—1982 part of the collection was exhibited in Geneva, Vienna, Belgrade and Paris, invariably eliciting rapturous comment wherever it went.

The sculptured images of the early Middle Ages are markedly influenced by the Hellenistic tradition (8th-century encolpion from Martvili). The great icon of the Transfiguration (A.D. 886) from the Zarzma monastery, rendered in a flat decorative manner, marks the assertion of a new style. Effectively conveyed in the human figure on the embossed processional cross from Ishkhani (A.D. 973) is the plastic quality of forms. The same tendency, along with archaic features, is revealed by objects dating from the late tenth and early eleventh century (processional cross of David III. Kuropolates, 10th c.; the gold chalice from Bedia, A.D. 999). The icon of the

Virgin of Tsilkhani (9th century), is remarkable for the faces executed in the encaustic technique.

There are magnificent specimens of embossed articles dating from the eleventh century, including the crosses from Martvili and Sapara, the icon of the Virgin from Shemokmedi and, lastly, the superb tondo from Ghelati.

Of twelfth-century date is the processional cross of David the Builder, the gold pectoral cross of Queen Tamar, adorned with emeralds, rubies and pearls, the *repoussé* covers of the Gospels from Berti and Tskarostavi made by the famous silversmiths Beka and Beshken Opizari. Special mention should be made of the frame of the Anchiskhati triptych with sculptured figures on a decorative background and an elegant ornament. Dated to the same period are *cloisonné* enamels from the Ghelati monastery, distinguished for their lively pattern and clear tones of the smalt.

Works dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, along with dryness of plastic forms, feature exaggerated decorative elements. Later on, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the figures are elongated, with the emotional aspect overplayed (crosses from Sadgeri and Goris-jvari). In some samples one feels oriental influences. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century embossing, though borrowing the old motifs and techniques, is of a much more inferior workmanship.

Of great interest is the collection of Georgian eighteenth- and nineteenth-century easel painting. The dominant, portrait, genre developed at first under the influence of Iranian, Russian and Western European art. A national school, represented mostly by unknown painters, gradually took shape by the mid-nineteenth century. Georgian portraits are notable for their static composition, meticulous delineation of the face and details of clothing, and a rather flat treatment of the body harking back to an ancient local tradition. The second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of professionally trained realist artists. Among them are the painters Giorgi Maisuradze (*Portrait of Crown Prince Bagrat, Por-*

Presentation in the Temple. Cloisonné enamel on gold. 12th century

Niko Pirosmani (1862—1918). *Janitor.*
Georgian Museum of Art

Niko Pirosmani (1862—1918). *Still Life*
(*The Large Still Life*). Georgian Museum of Art

David Kakabadze (1889—1952). *Landscape.*
Georgian Museum of Art

trait of Chichinadze), Romanoz Gvelesiani (*Kakhetian with a Jar*, *Portrait of Gigo Gabashvili*), Alexander Beridze (*Girl Knitting a Stocking*, *Portrait of a Smiling Old Man*), Alexander Mrevlishvili (*Low Fence*, *At a Rural District Office*), and Gigo Gabashvili (*The Alaverdoba Patronal Festival*, *Three Townsmen*, *The Bazaar in Samarkand*). The work of

Lado Gudiashvili (1896—1980). *The Tsotskhali Fish*. 1920. Georgian Museum of Art

the founder of modern Georgian sculpture Jakov Nikoladze is represented by a portrait of Lenin, a portrait of the poet Chakhrukhadze and other pieces.

The museum has a large number of works by the self-taught artist Niko Pirosmani (1862—1918). Painted on simple black oilcloth in a restricted range of colours, the artist's pictures are simple and naive,

Helena Akhvlediani (1901—1975). *Metekhi*. 1955. Georgian Museum of Art

yet never failing to touch the spectator by his sincerity, his amazing knack for generalization, for singling out the essential. On display are the pictures *Janitor*, *Three Princes Carousing on the Grass*, *Fisherman*, *The Polar Bear* and *Girl with a Balloon*.

The canvases of the outstanding Georgian painter David Kakabadze (1889—1952) reveal his analytical, rational way of thinking. While being perfectly up-to-date, the painter always remained true to national Georgian art. His landscapes, especially those of his native Imereti (*Imereti — My Mother*, *An Imereti Landscape*), are deeply realistic, however generalized. Kakabadze sees beauty in the most ordinary of motifs, conveying this vision with convincing authenticity.

Well represented in the museum, the work of the major Georgian artist Lado Gudiashvili (1896—1980) is remarkable for its distinctive individual idiom, singular national style and humanism. In his emotional and expressive art everything is subordinated to a fine linear rhythm imparting great harmony to his compositions. The painter was exceptionally prolific: thousands of his canvases amaze one by the richness of design and a sensation of the joy of living. On display are the canvases *The Tsotskhali Fish*, *At the Deer Spring*, *The Happless One*, and *Portrait of Tamara Tsitsishvili*.

The art of Helena Akhvlediani (1901—1975) is typically Georgian, temperamental and optimistic. Her landscapes depicting the old districts of Telavi and Signakhi are full of breath and motion. Most of her canvases are devoted to her native Tbilisi. The Narikala Fortress, the city's squares and narrow hilly streets, houses under tiled roofs, rickety balconies and stairs, courtyards with the washing flapping in the wind, all this has been captured on canvas by the inspired brush of the brilliant master. Such are the paintings *Old Tbilisi*, *Vinny (Wine) Rise*, *The Maidan*, to name but a few.

Modern Georgian painting is represented in the museum by every generation of artists, displaying an amazing diversity of creative talent and a profound interpretation of life.

Opening up from Lenin Square is **Rustaveli Avenue,** Tbilisi's main thoroughfare and most beautiful street. Situated here are administrative buildings housing the highest government bodies, theatres, museums, research and educational establishments. On national holidays the avenue becomes the scene of festive processions.

At the beginning of the avenue stands the large building of the **Tbilisi Department Store** (1977, architects Revaz Bairamashvili, David Morbedadze, Leri Medzmariashvili). Its white-stone walls, resting on high columns, open up in the centre to form a courtyard; on its far side is the entrance to the **Griboyedov Russian Drama Theatre.**

Adjoining the department store is a large garden on one side of which is the building (1865—1868, architect Otto Simonson) now housing the **Palace of**

←
Rustaveli Avenue

Young Pioneers and Schoolchildren. The chief decorative feature of the main façade (overlooking Rustaveli Avenue) is a two-tier arcaded loggia. Designed in Renaissance forms, the building's interiors are quite imposing, too, with marble state staircases, suites of large halls and rooms grouped around internal patios. The Palace incorporates a **Toy Museum** which has a collection of some 1,500 dolls from all parts of the world.

An entire block opposite the Palace of Young Pioneers and Schoolchildren is occupied by the **S. Janashia Museum of Georgia** (completed 1929, architect Nikolai Severov). At the centre of the three-storey building is a powerful portal in the shape of an arched niche with pilasters on both sides. The same motif, though somewhat simplified, is repeated on the narrow lateral projections. The building is well integrated with the surroundings. Founded in 1852 under the Caucasian Department of the Russian Geographical Society, the museum eventually developed into an independent Caucasian Museum, merging in 1878 with a museum of the Society of Enthusiasts of Caucasian Archaeology. Following the Great October Revolution of 1917 it was renamed the Museum of Georgia and is now the largest treas-

S. Janashia Museum of Georgia in Rustaveli Avenue. 1929. Architect Nikolai Severov (1887—1957)

Gold beaker found at Trialeti. First half, 2 millennium B.C. S. Janashia Museum of Georgia

Temple pendants found at Akhalgori. 4th century B.C. S. Janashia Museum of Georgia

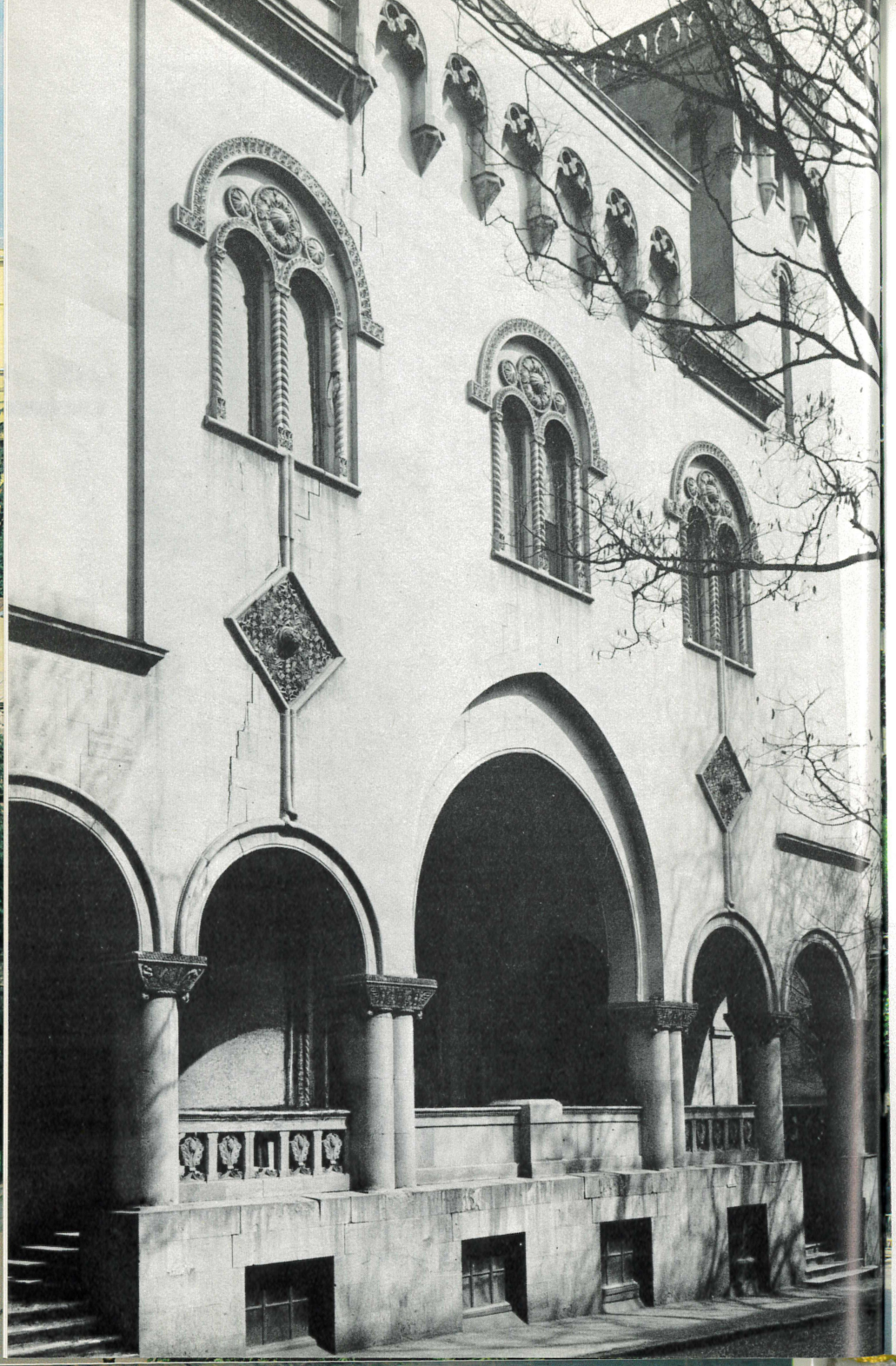
ure-house of Georgian cultural monuments, its stocks totalling over 850,000 items.

The museum has a large amount of archaeological material from the Stone Age to the Middle Ages, including finds from the well-known caves of Davis-Khvreli, Sakazhia and Sagvarjile. Preserved here are the primitive agricultural implements and pottery dating from the tenth — seventh millennia B.C.

Deserving of special mention is the material from the settlements of the Shulaveris culture: domical adobe houses, circular in plan, with tools made of flint, bone and horn; pottery; and anthropomorphic clay figurines associated with the fertility cult. Tribes of the Kura-Araxes culture (second half of the 4th millennium — early 2nd millennium B.C.) are represented by exhibits demonstrating the development of plough tilling, animal husbandry and handicrafts.

Worthy of note are a funereal chariot, painted and black-glazed pottery, bronze vessels and weapons, silver and gold objects from the barrows of Trialeti (first half of the 2nd millennium B.C.). The archaeological display is supplemented by a Special Treasure Room, where one can see invaluable specimens of *repoussé* work and jewellery. The collection contains ancient objects made of noble metals from the barrows of Kakheti (3rd millennium B.C.); silver vessels with the representations of humans and animals, gold

Amulet-jar and balm-bottle: gold necklace found at Armazis-khevi. Late 2nd century. S. Janashia Museum of Georgia



bowls and filigreed ornaments with polychrome inlays from Trialeti; diadems, earrings, filigreed pendants with fine granulations and embossed reliefs from Vani, Akhalgori and Algheti (6th—4th centuries B.C.).

The gold beaker from Trialeti adorned with a geometric design and studded with jewels, as well as the fifth-century B.C. gold pendants from Akhalgori are undoubtedly among some of the best in the world.

There are splendid objects from the burials of the *pitiakhshes* (rulers) of Iberia of the early centuries A.D., discovered at Armazis-khevi: numerous gold ornaments, silver utensils and other artifacts, among them an openwork gold necklace from the grave of the *pitiakhsh* Asparug, a gold woven necklace with an amulet-holder adorned with garnet insets and a sculptured ram's head of amethyst, and, finally, gold belt buckles with gems executed in the most complex jewellery techniques and testifying to the high level of Georgian culture in early centuries A.D. Scholars single out two basic groups of objects from Armazis-khevi, Bori, Ureki, Kldeeti. The first includes articles of polychrome goldsmithery, the products of local jewellers' art whose development is based on century-long traditions and characterized by a uniform underivative style. The second, comprising mainly silver vessels and gems, and reflecting Roman and Hellenistic tastes, includes two bowls, one with an elegant relief image of Antinous, the other with a portrait of the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius. The representations they carry attest to the broad cultural

Public Library in Ketskhoveli Street. 1913—1916. Architect Anatoly Kalghin (1875—1943), artist Heinrich Grinevsky (1869—1937)

ties Georgia maintained with the antique world. This is further confirmed by monuments bearing epigraphic inscriptions displayed in the museum. Among them is a slab found at Mtskheta in 1867, with an inscription describing the reinforcement of the walls of the fortress by the Roman Emperor Vespasian in A.D. 75 (*To King Mithridates of Iberia — Friend of Caesar and of the Romans*); a bilingual mortuary stele discovered at Armazis-khevi in 1940 and telling of the death of the young and beautiful Seraphita — it also provides valuable insights into Iberia's political system bearing an inscription of the *pitiakhsh* Sharagas of King Mithridates, which relates of popular unrest in Iberia in the first century A.D.

The material culture of Georgia in the feudal epoch is very well documented in the museum. Finds from the excavations of the ancient sites of Urbnisi, Dmanisi, Gheguti and Gudarekhi highlight the importance of the adoption of Christianity as a state religion in the early fourth century, the development of the economy and culture, the flourishing of the towns, of crafts and trade, of secular and ecclesiastical literature, of architecture, painting and sculpture. Noteworthy is a fifth-century builder's inscription from the Sion Cathedral in Bolnisi, early Christian stelae, mural portraits of statesmen, the carved doors of the eleventh-century churches at Chukuli and Jakhunderi, and other relics.

Housed at the same department is a superb collection of Georgian weapons and a rich collection of

Kvashveti Church of St George at the corner of Rustaveli Avenue and Jorjadze Street. 1910. Architect Leopold Bilfeldt (1839—?)

coins minted throughout Georgia's history and also in the countries of the Middle East, in Rome and Byzantium, with which Georgia maintained a lively trade.

Quite interesting is the Department of Georgia's Modern History, reflecting the development of her material and spiritual culture in the period from 1801 to 1921. Well documented is the material on the unification of Georgia with Russia. Exhibits and documents relate of the economy, the peculiar trends in the life of the urban and rural population, the national liberation movement in Georgia and the revolutionary struggle against tsarist autocracy, for the victory of a socialist revolution.

The department is complemented by an ethnographic exhibition featuring various kinds of handicrafts — artistic metalwork (casting and chasing), jewellery, the working of bone, horn, jet, the making of pottery and of musical instruments. Also here is a rich collection of Georgian national costumes.

Opposite the museum in Ketskhoveli Street in a building formerly occupied by a bank is the **Public Library** (1916, architect Anatoly Kalghin, artist Heinrich Grinevsky). Its tower (on the join of two streets), and the architecture of the façades — with their open loggias, arcades, terraces and the richly carved window and door surrounds — are inspired by the forms of old Georgian architecture and its varied ornamentation. Their combination, though somewhat eclectic, reveals the authors' great ingenuity. The interiors of the spacious halls, the small studies,

State Bank in Kirov Street. Early 20th century

service premises and the stately vestibule are designed in the same traditions. The decorative painting harks back to motifs from the miniature illuminations of ancient manuscripts and frescoes. The building of the Public Library is typical of the early twentieth century when ideas of reviving the national cultural heritage enthused many progressive intellectuals.

The same trend was manifest while building the **Kvashveti Church of St George.** Having received a commission in 1904 to design a church true to the old Georgian traditions, the architect Leopold Bilfeldt took for his model the famous eleventh-century church at Samtavisi. However, despite the excellence of its execution, some slight changes in proportions considerably impaired the copy's artistic merits. The remains of the eminent Georgian poet and public figure Grigol Orbeliani (1800—1883) were transferred to the crypt of this church. Its altar was painted in 1946 by the artist Lado Gudiashvili.

Rising on Rustaveli Avenue is the **Government House of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.** The upper building (1933—1938, architect Victor Kokorin and Giorgi Lezhava) is allotted to the ministries, and the lower one (1946—1953, architects Victor Kokorin, Giorgi Lezhava and Vladimir Nasaridze) to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the Republic. The space in between forms a large inner courtyard. The House is linked with the avenue via propylaea which make up a small open courtyard leading visitors to the

Government House of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic in Rustaveli Avenue. 1953. Architects Victor Kokorin, Giorgi Lezhava (1903—1977)

Monument to Ilia Chavchavadze (1837—1907) and to Akaki Tsereteli (1840—1915) in Rustaveli Avenue. 1958. Sculptors Shota Mikatadze (1905—1979), Valentin Topuridze (1907—1980), architect Givi Melkadze (1923—1981)

right — to the Supreme Soviet — or left, to the Council of Ministers. The imposing five-tier vestibule of the Council of Ministers with open galleries on every storey is illuminated from above. Situated under the three-tier vestibule of the Supreme Soviet is a congress hall seating nine hundred persons.

The façade with golden Bolnisi tufa is designed as a high arcade resting on a powerful granite base. Massive rectangular pillars, according to a Georgian architectural tradition, have demi-shafts running along their corners.

Not far from Government House, in a small park in front of what is one of Tbilisi's oldest schools, stands a **monument to the great Georgian writers Ilia Chavchavadze and Akaki Tsereteli** (1958, sculptors Shota Mikatadze and Valentin Topuridze, architect Givi Melkadze).

In 1977 the *Intourist* Hotel (1886—1893, architect Albert Zalzman), situated opposite Government House, was handed over to the Artists' Union of Georgia. Displayed in its exhibition halls are works by contemporary artists; an art salon offers paintings and graphic works for sale, and there is an artists' café.

Behind the Artists' House, in Ketskhoveli Street, is the **Lado Gudiashvili Memorial Museum** where one can see most of the paintings and graphic works of Lado Gudiashvili, People's Artist of the USSR, a major and original master. At 14 Dzerzhinsky Street is the **Gamrekeli Museum.** On display are the theatrical designs and stage settings of the well-known stage

Lado Gudiashvili Memorial Museum
in Ketskhoveli Street

designer Irakli Gamrekeli (1894—1943). Moreover, one can get acquainted here with the history of Georgian theatrical art and learn about Russo-Georgian cultural ties.

Not far from the Artists' House, in the Communards Gardens, is the **Picture Gallery.** Put up in 1883 for a Museum of Military History, the building was called Temple of Glory. In 1930 the premises were transformed into a picture gallery which is now the scene of the annual spring and autumn art exhibitions as well as temporary exhibitions of art works in different genres.

The slightly convex building of the *Tbilisi* Hotel (1915, architect Gabriel Ter-Mikelov) smoothly follows the bend of Rustaveli Avenue. The ground floor, incorporating the vestibule and restaurant halls, is distinguished on the façade by a darker shade of facing stone. The unobtrusively designed first floor is transitional to the next two storeys, featuring pilasters of the Corinthian order and other Late Renaissance elements.

Adjoining the hotel is the **Shota Rustaveli Georgian** Academic Theatre. This is the building of the former Theatrical Society (1901, architects Korneli Tatishchev, Alexander Shimkevich). The design of the façade with its tall pilasters, large arched windows, round illuminators, an attic with scale-like roofing and portico stress the building's public character.

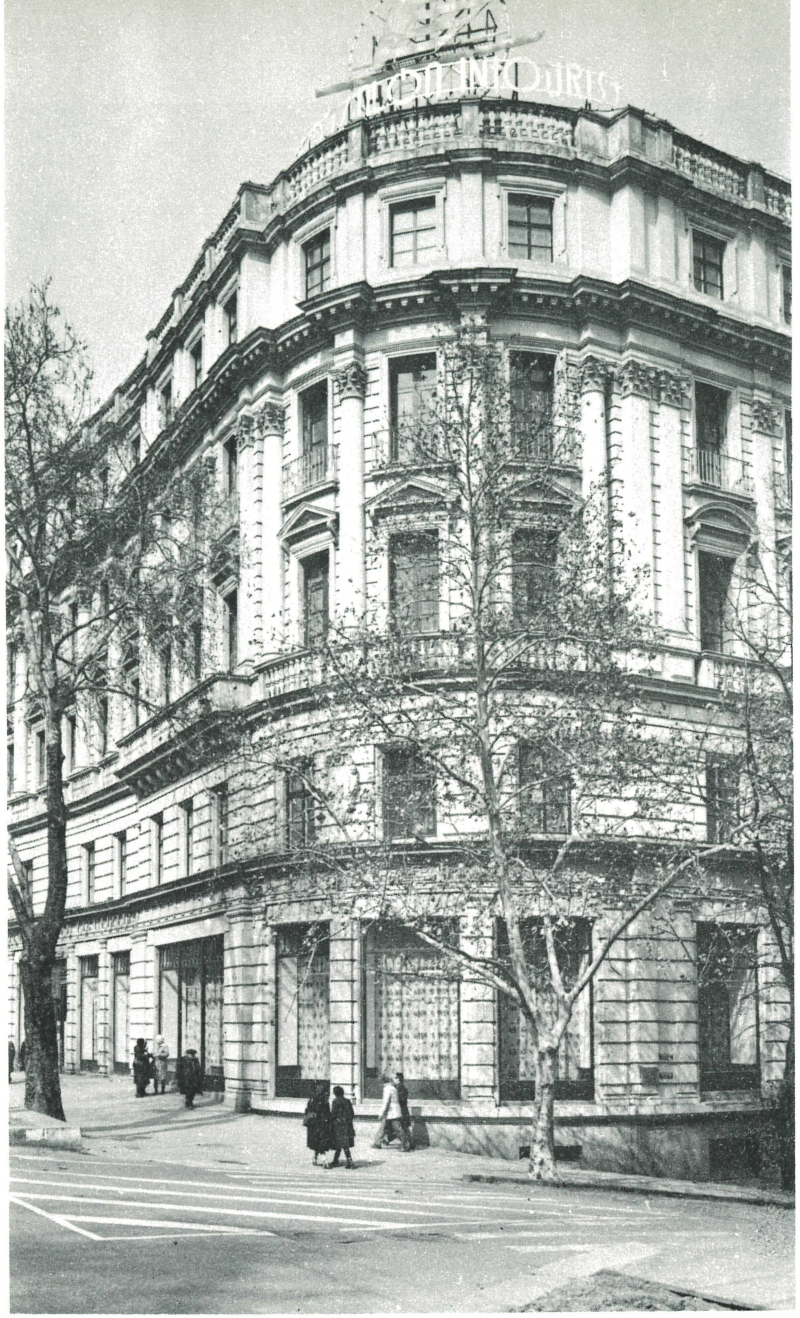
In 1919 the basement floor of the theatre housed the *Chymerioni* club and tavern established by the

Building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia in Dzerzhinsky Street. 1980. Architects Vakhtang Abramishvili (*b.* 1928) and Guram Mirianashvili (*b.* 1927)

Symbolist poets of the Blue Horns group — Titsian Tabidze, Paolo Yashvili and Giorgi Leonidze, among others. The walls of the club were painted by the well-known artists Sergei Sudeikin, Lado Gudiashvili, David Kakabadze and the Polish artist Sigismund Waliszewski who resided at that time in Tbilisi. At present the mural is cleared from later accretions.

Close by is the **Zacharia Paliashvili Opera and Ballet House** (1880—1896, architect Victor Schroeter). Its façades and interiors, as prescribed by the terms of the contest, were designed in the Moorish style. Such leanings towards exotic oriental architecture were characteristic of Georgia in the late nineteenth century. In 1973 the theatre burnt down, with only the frontal portico of the main façade and the adjacent hall and foyer, and part of the lateral walls being spared. When rebuilding the theatre (1977, architects Leri Medzmariashvili, M. Chachanidze), it was decided to restore its initial aspect. However, if the requirements of modern stage technology were to be met, the backstage portion had to be enlarged. The trapeziform auditorium was made oval, and instead of three appeared five tiers of balconies. The renovated building fitted the avenue so well that the considerable alterations that had to be made after all, passed virtually unnoticed.

Tbilisi has always been a city with strong musical traditions. Here the great Russian composer Piotr Tchaikovsky worked on his operas and the famous bass singer Fiodor Shaliapin began his career. Asso-



Tbilisi Hotel in Rustaveli Avenue. 1915. Architect Gabriel Ter-Mikelov (1874—1949)

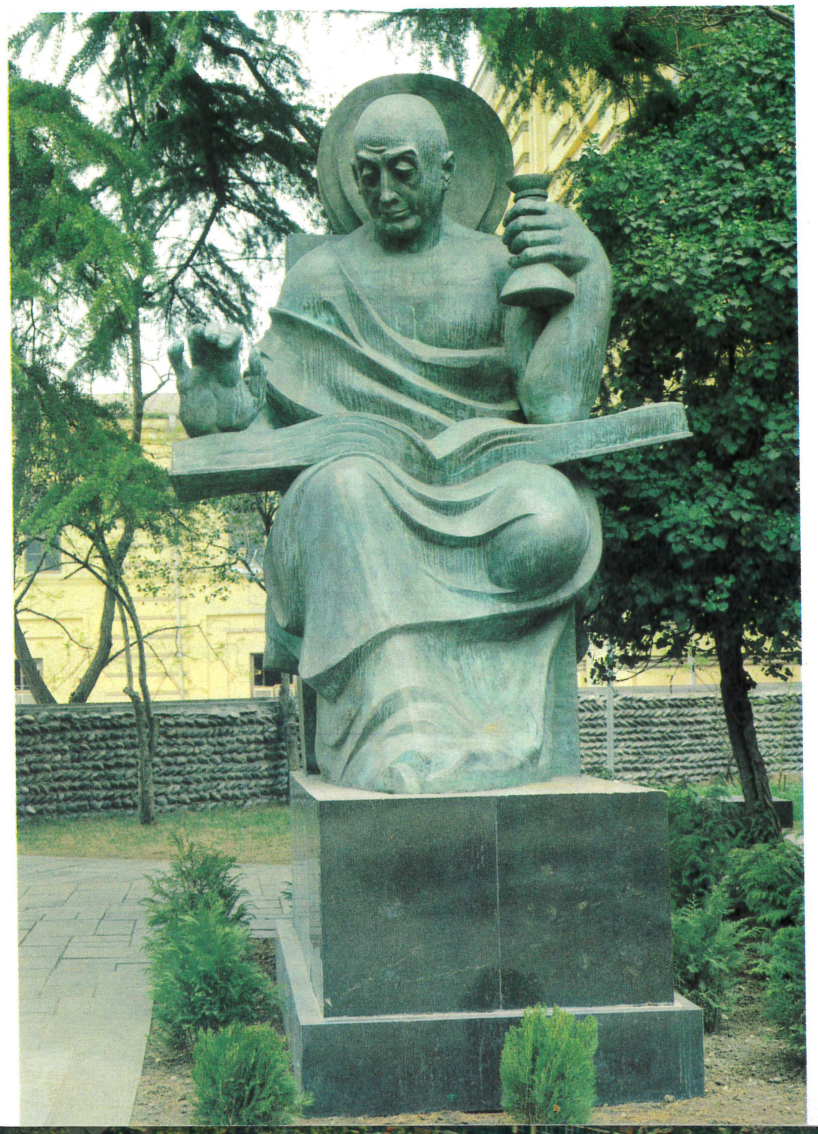
Shota Rustaveli Georgian Academic Theatre in Rustaveli Avenue. 1901. Architects Korneli Tatishchev and Alexander Shimkevich

ciated with the Paliashvili Opera and Ballet House are the names of such outstanding singers as Vano Sarajishvili and Alexander Pirogov, the dancer Vakhtang Chabukiani, and of many other outstanding operatic and ballet performers.

Small gardens are laid out next to the theatre. In the garden to its right there is a **bust of** the writer **Akaki Tsereteli** (1922, sculptor Yakov Nikoladze), and in the garden on the left, a **monument** (1972, sculptor Merab Berdzenishvili) **to** the creator of the first Georgian opera, the composer **Zacharia Paliashvili** (1871—1933) after whom the theatre is named. The composer is holding a torch, a symbol of knowledge, while the fingers of his right hand seem to be beating time to music.

Zacharia Paliashvili Opera and Ballet House in Rustaveli Avenue. 1880—1896. Architect Victor Schroeter (1839—1901)

Monument to Zacharia Paliashvili (1871—1933). 1972. Sculptor Merab Berdzenishvili (*b.* 1929). In the garden by the Zacharia Paliashvili Opera and Ballet House



Iveria Hotel in Rustaveli Avenue. 1967. Architects Otar Kalandarishvili (*b.* 1925) and Irene Tskhomelidze (*b.* 1930)

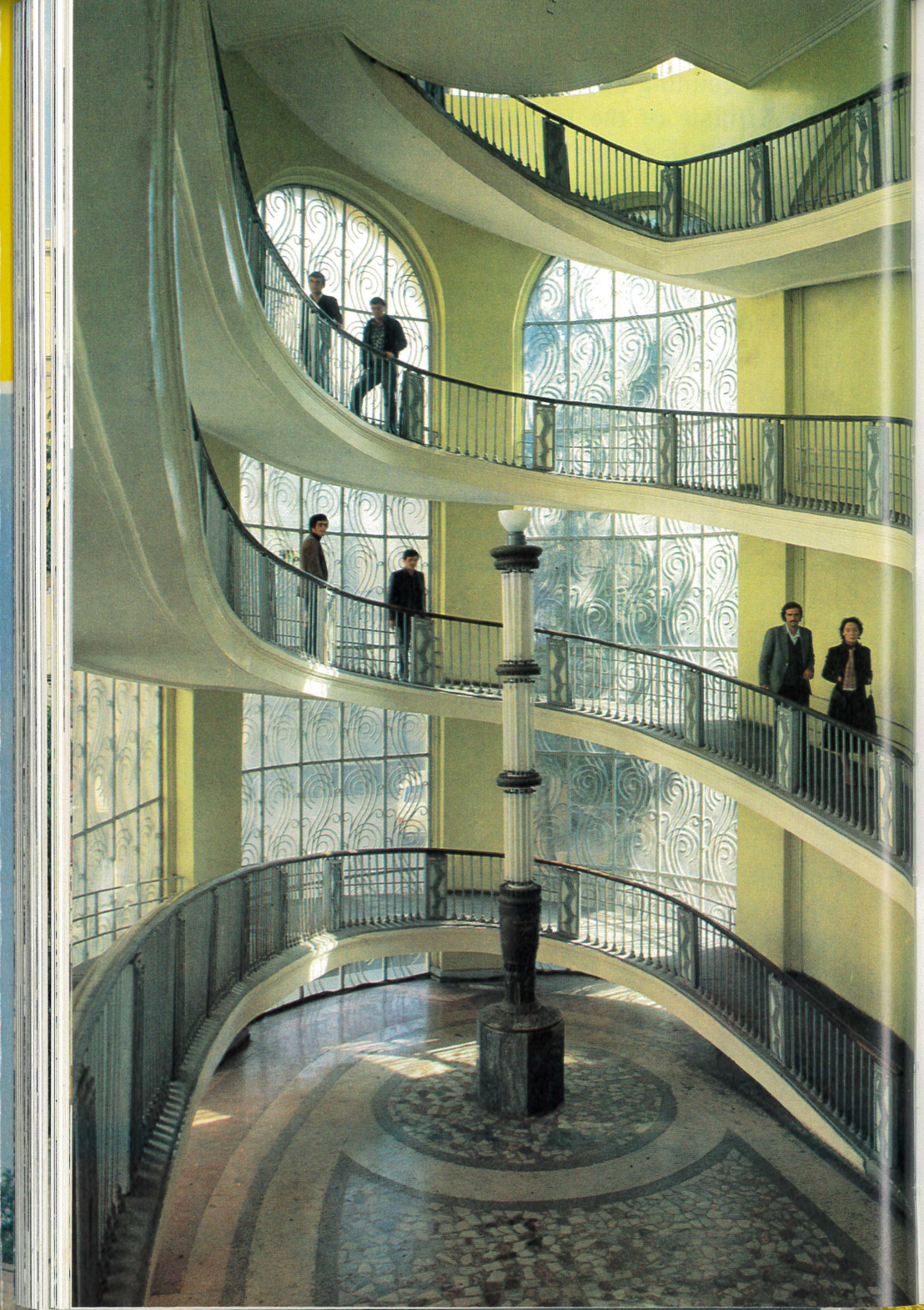
Residential house in Rustaveli Avenue. Architect N. Obolonsky

Building of the Presidium of the Georgian Academy of Sciences in Rustaveli Avenue. 1953. Architects Konstantin Chkheidze (*b.* 1912) and Mikhail Chkhikvadze (*b.* 1903)

One building away from the theatre is the **Georgian Affiliate of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the CPSU Central Committee** (1938, architect Alexei Shchusev). Its assembly hall with amphitheatre is adorned with painted panels by the artist Ucha Japaridze.

The portico of the main façade is flanked by pylons with ten paired columns rising the entire height of the building. A wide frieze on the portal is decorated with a low relief on themes of revolutionary struggles and socialist construction in Georgia (sculptor Tamara Abakelia), the lateral pylons carry high reliefs on themes of revolutionary unity (sculptor Yakov Nikoladze). The façade is faced with yellow Bolnisi tufa which matches well the grey basalt of the profiled base and the polished granite of the columns. Georgian architectural motifs, though used sparingly, enliven the overall composition. The monumental order, in tune with the large portal, is combined with a smaller order of the pylons and the other façades, in keeping with the scale of the surrounding buildings.

Rising next to the Institute is the building of the **Central Telegraph** (1977, architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili and Teimuraz Mikashavidze). Its plan is based on two inner courtyards with service premises running along their perimeter. The building can be seen to advantage from Rustaveli Avenue, the new square in front of the *Iveria* Hotel and from the opposite bank of the river. The divisions of the façades



definitely harmonize with the orders of the adjacent building — the Affiliate of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Both edifices are faced with Bolnisi tufa.

Running over the slope of Mount Mtatsminda is Griboyedov Street. Worthy of note here is house No. 22 put up in 1856 by the architect Grigori Ivanov. Its rich interiors feature stucco decoration and painting on the walls and ceilings, mirror mosaics, stained-glass windows and carving. Since 1922 it is the home of the **Georgian Academy of Arts.** Teaching here at different times were Yevgeny Lanceray, Iosif Charlemagne, Vasily Shukhayev, David Kakabadze, Lado Gudiashvili, Yakov Nikoladze, Sergo Kobuladze, and other artists. The best works of its graduates are on display in the halls of the Academy museum.

The twenty-two-storey *Iveria* Hotel (1967, architects Otar Kalandarishvili and Irene Tskhomelidze) makes for a splendid sight, especially when viewed against the background of Mount Mtatsminda, adding a cheerful note to the surrounding cityscape. Its soaring high-rise, faced by turquoise-tinted Tedzami tufa, is lined by loggias. Used for the decoration of the hotel are stained glass, mosaics, tapestries. The doors of the entrance hall, divided into square insets, are covered with chased reliefs (sculptor Antimoz Gorgadze). Deserving of attention are the murals of the restaurant (artist Bella Berdzenishvili), and the inner courtyard with a mosaic panel on a wall entwined by vines, a pool and the marble sculpture *Girl with a Flower* (sculptor Guram Kordzakhia).

Lower station of the cable road leading to Mount Mtatsminda. 1960. Architect Konstantin Chkheidze (*b.* 1912)

The avenue ends at **Rustaveli Square,** where on one side stands a large apartment house in Art Nouveau style, and on the other, an administrative building with a tall corner tower (1953, architects Constantin Chkheidze and Mikhail Chkhikvadze). Since 1980 it houses the **Presidium of the Georgian Academy of Sciences,** while its wing is allotted to the **Georgian Film-Makers' Union and Cinema House.** The building has a typical south-city ground-floor arcade and is faced with stone of warm colours; it is attractive despite an abundance of disparate details and ornamental patterns.

Standing in the square is a **monument to** the great Georgian poet **Shota Rustaveli** (1942, sculptor Kote Merabishvili, architect Shota Tulashvili).

Rising steeply from the square is Leonidze Street in which the **David Kakabadze Memorial Museum** is located. Arranged in the artist's flat, it has on display his paintings and graphic works. Not far from the square, at No. 12 Kiacheli Street, is the **Helena Akhvlediani Memorial Museum** which still preserves the atmosphere of an artist's studio. During the painter's lifetime it was the place of frequent exhibitions and gatherings by men of letters, artists and musicians.

Rustaveli Avenue forks out into Lenin Street and Melikishvili Street, forming a square at the juncture.

The square is dominated by the huge rotunda of the **Georgian Philharmonic's Concert Hall** (1971, architect Ivan Chkhenkeli). The entire ground floor is occupied by a large entrance hall

Monument to Shota Rustaveli in Rustaveli Square. 1942. Sculptor Kote Merabishvili (*b.* 1906), architect Shota Tulashvili

featuring an original plafond made of tiny metal tubing. The austere walls are enlivened by decorative insets and an elegant sculptured relief, *The Birth of Music*, rendered in a graphic manner (1971, sculptor Merab Berdzenishvili). The large auditorium seats 2,500 persons. Its walls and plafond are covered with

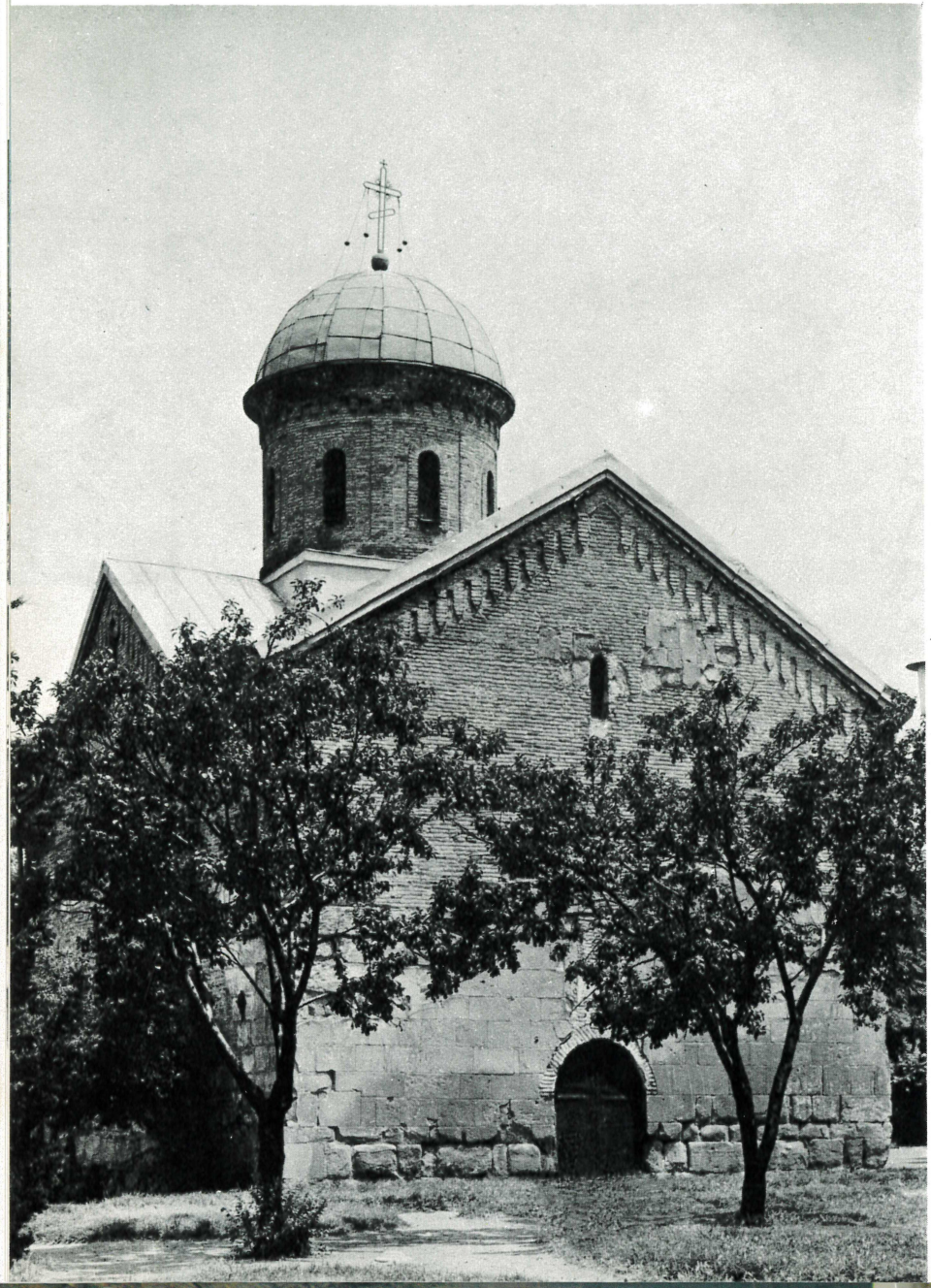
Helena Akhvlediani Memorial Museum
in Kiacheli Street

Helena Akhvlediani (1901—1975). *Tbilisi. Winter.* 1974. Helena Akhvlediani Memorial Museum

Concert Hall of the Georgian Philharmonic. 1971.
Architect Ivan Chkhenkeli (*b.* 1910)

Merab Berdzenishvili (*b.* 1929).
The Muse. 1971

Lurji Monasteri (Blue Monastery) in Kiacheli Street. 12th century (now the premises of the Museum of the History of Georgian Medicine)



wooden panels, glazed galleries on every floor give a view of the city, thus linking the interior with outdoors. The considerable difference in the levels of Lenin and Melikishvili Streets allowed for incorporating a smaller auditorium with 750 seats under the building's main volume, complete with a separate foyer and services.

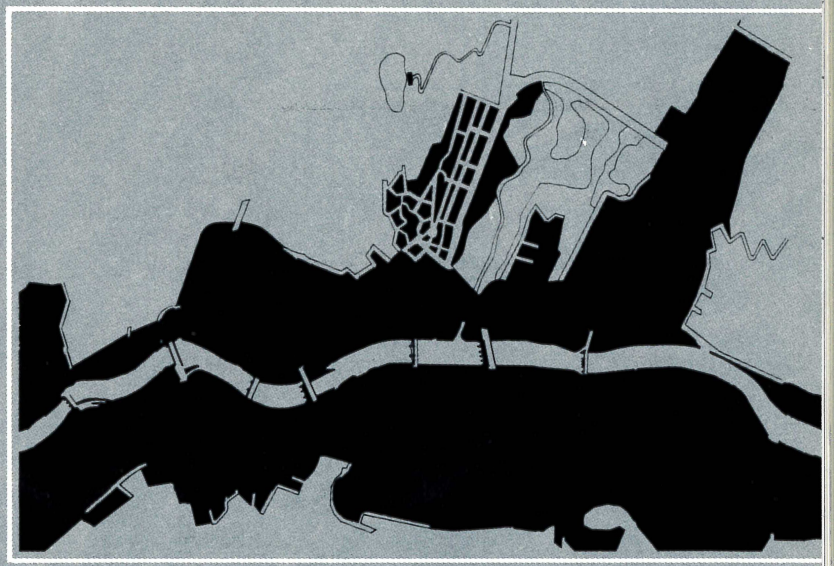
The bronze figure of a *Muse* (1971, sculptor Merab Berdzenishvili), placed in front of the building, may be regarded as a bold example of the use of monumental sculpture in an architectural composition. The Muse, a source of inspiration and beauty, has thrown open her strong arms, unstintingly bestowing joy and goodness; the sculptor gave her a lovely face with a mysterious and enticing gaze of the large eyes, a bewitching smile hovering on her lips.

In **Kirov Park,** across the street from the Concert Hall, is the **Chess and Alpine Club** (1972, architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili and Herman Gudushauri). The building is attractively laconic and simple in design. A small auditorium is surrounded by a veranda-cum-foyer offering a view of the city and giving access to the park through one of the side exits. The building stands on the very brow of a ravine, extant on whose other side is the **Lurji Monasteri** (Blue Monastery) which derives its name from the turquoise-glazed tiles that once covered its dome. In plan it is an elongated rectangle. The dome rests on the jutting walls of the apse and two free-standing octahedral pillars. The church dates back to the late twelfth cen-

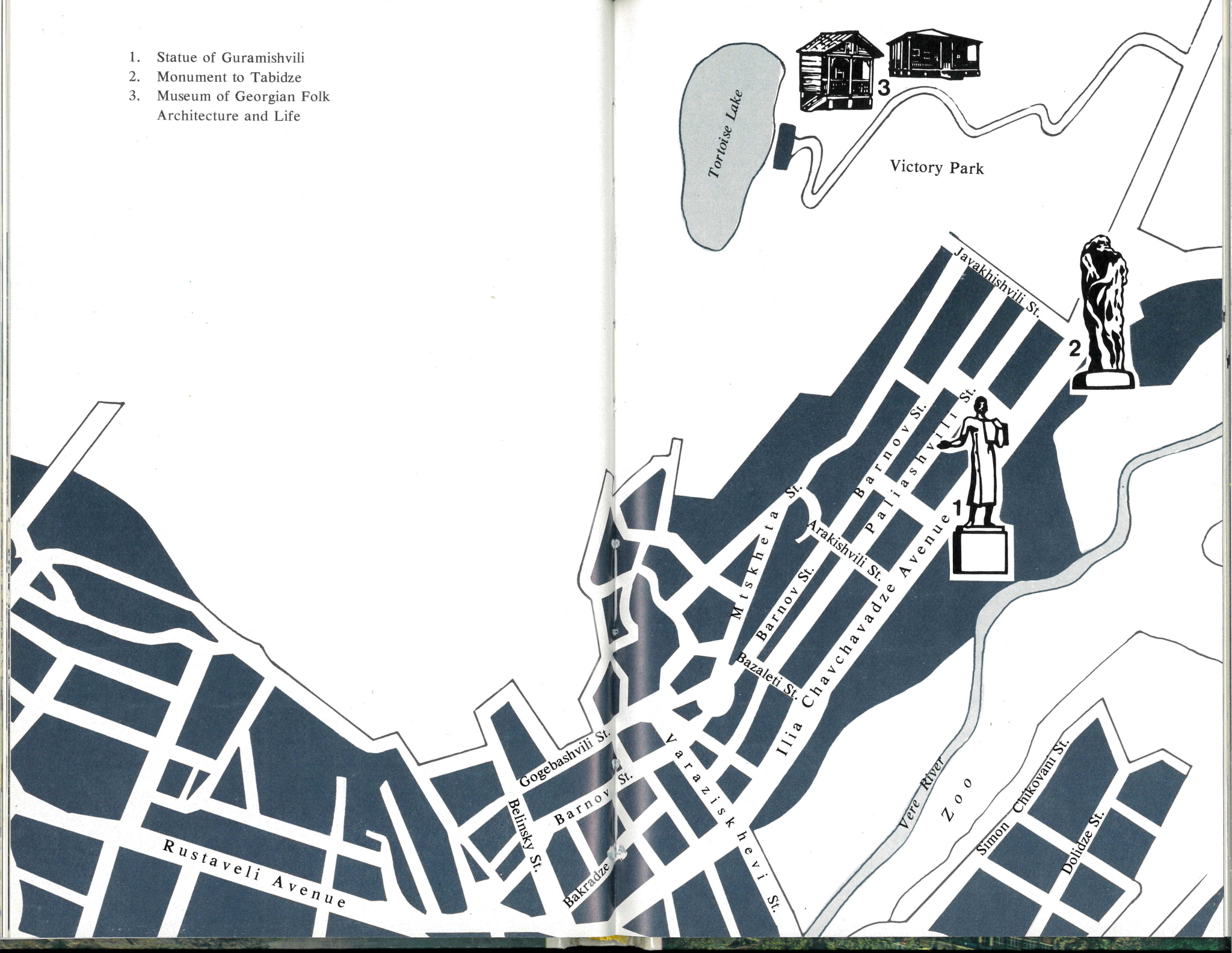
tury and came down to us drastically altered by seventeenth- and nineteenth-century reconstructions. Surviving from the initial edifice is only the dressed stone masonry of the lower walls, windows with ornamental surrounds, and an inscription in the tympanum of the southern entrance saying that the church was built by Archbishop Basil of Kartli.

At present the church houses the **Museum of the History of Georgian Medicine,** which traces the development of medical treatment from as early as the third millennium B.C., and has on displpay manuscripts of medical treatises dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries.

The Vake District



1. Statue of Guramishvili
2. Monument to Tabidze
3. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life



Melikishvili Street leads to the Vake district, a large residential area the development of which started in the 1920s. Situated between Chavchavadze Avenue and Varazis-khevi Street is **Tbilisi University.** Its building (1900—1916, architect Simon Kldiashvili) was begun on the initiative and money of progressive Georgian public figures, and was intended as a gymnasium for the children of the gentry. The overall composition is strictly symmetrical. The main block, surmounted in the central part by a dome, is accentuated by an entrance with broad stairs and a bilateral ramp. Its façades are treated with white rustic work in the Classicist style; strict proportions enhance the building's stateliness.

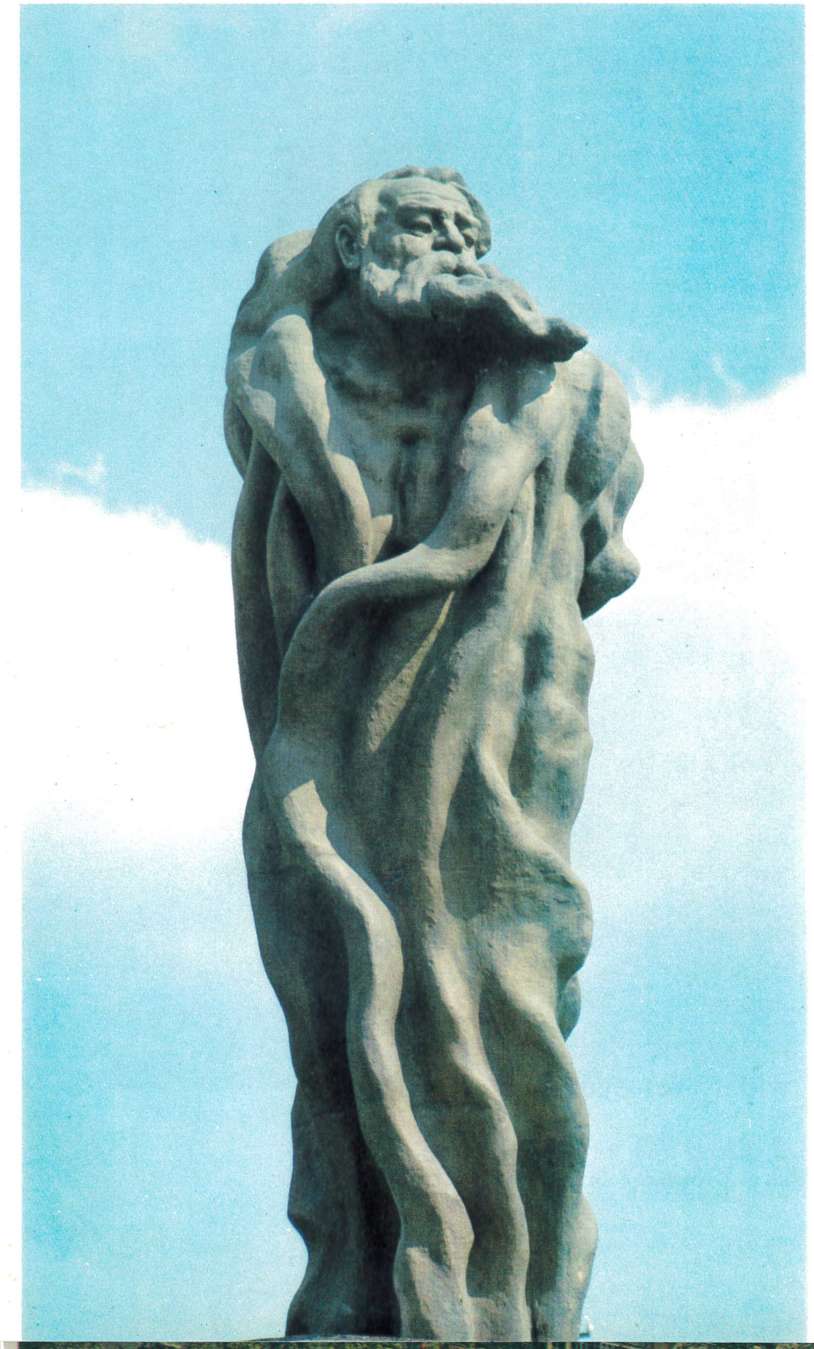
Rising near the main block is the building of the Physics and Chemistry Faculty (1937, architect Mikhail Shavishvili), its plan following the curve of the avenue. The central part of the façade features a deep portico with Ionic columns approached by stairs.

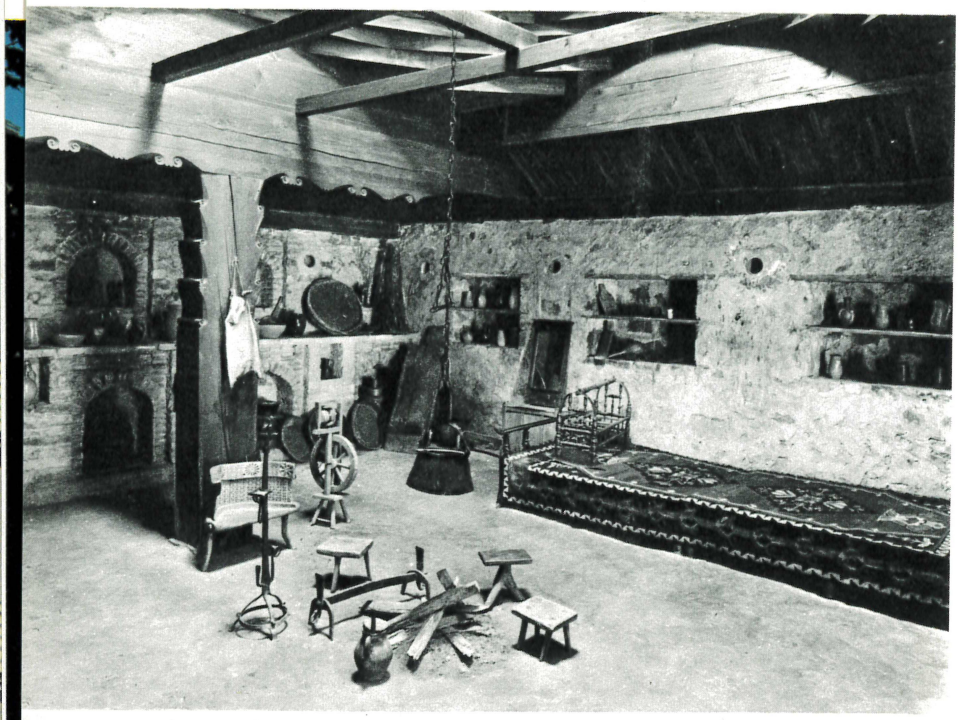
← Residential houses in Kekelidze Street

Statue of David Guramishvili (1705—1792) in Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue. 1965. Sculptor Merab Berdzenishvili (*b.* 1929), architects Teimuraz Mikashavidze (*b.* 1934) and Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili (1915—1978)

Tbilisi University in Chavchavadze Avenue. 1900—1916.
Architect Simon Kldiashvili (1865—1920)

Monument to Galaktion Tabidze (1892—1959)
in Ilia Chavchavadze Avenue. 1980. Sculptor
Juansher Mikatadze (*b.* 1932)





Worthy of note in a small park not far from the University is the **statue of** the outstanding Georgian poet **David Guramishvili,** set up in 1965 by Merab Berdzenishvili. The sculptor endeavoured to reveal the poet's tragic fate — the fate of a man destined to wander all his life far away from his birthland. The manner of portrayal is generalized. The ascetic austerity of the angular figure clad in an ancient Georgian costume accentuates the poet's grave visage; the hollow cheeks, the broken line of the eyebrows above his widely set eyes suggest suffering.

Darbazi (house) from the village of Karagaji. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life

Standing at the end of Chavchavadze Avenue is a **monument to** another distinguished Georgian poet **Galaktion Tabidze.** The bronze figure by the sculptor Juansher Mikatadze was unveiled in 1980.

In a huge park at the end of the Vake District is the **Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life** (1968, layout by architect L. Sumbadze).

The display is accommodated in ten sectors corresponding to the different climatic zones of Georgia. The diversity of Georgia's natural features determined the original compositional and structural de-

Sajalabo — the ancient type of dwelling for a large family in Western Georgia. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life

vices and the specific layouts of houses. They are notable for their rationality, beauty, spaciousness, comfort and, of course, their unique national colouring. For example, houses in Western Georgia, the so-called **oda sakhli**, are distinguished by the clear-cut layout of the homestead, dividing the main living and reception area from the service premises. An attractive green lawn with large shady trees in front of the house is a boon in the hot summer months. There is a picturesque gate shaped as a fence of evergreen plants; great care is lavished on the decoration of the service

Oda-sakhli house from Mingrelia. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life

structures such as wattled bins for maize, barns, cattlesheds, the wine cellar. Also very comfortable and convenient is the house with balconies, a fireplace and built-in cupboards. In everything one feels the stamp of the people's age-long culture, its experience, wisdom and taste.

In the sector devoted to the Kartli territory one may see the most ancient, *darbazi*-type dwelling of Georgia. This is a hall-type dwelling with a hearth in the middle and a light and smoke aperture at the top of the roof. The rear wall displays two tiers of arched

Barn from Mingrelia. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life

niches. The dodecahedral timber-set forming a beehive dome (*gvirgvini*) is assembled of 452 beams resting on two main pillars — *dedabodzi* (mother-pillar). This type of dwelling in Georgian territory goes back to the third millennium B.C.

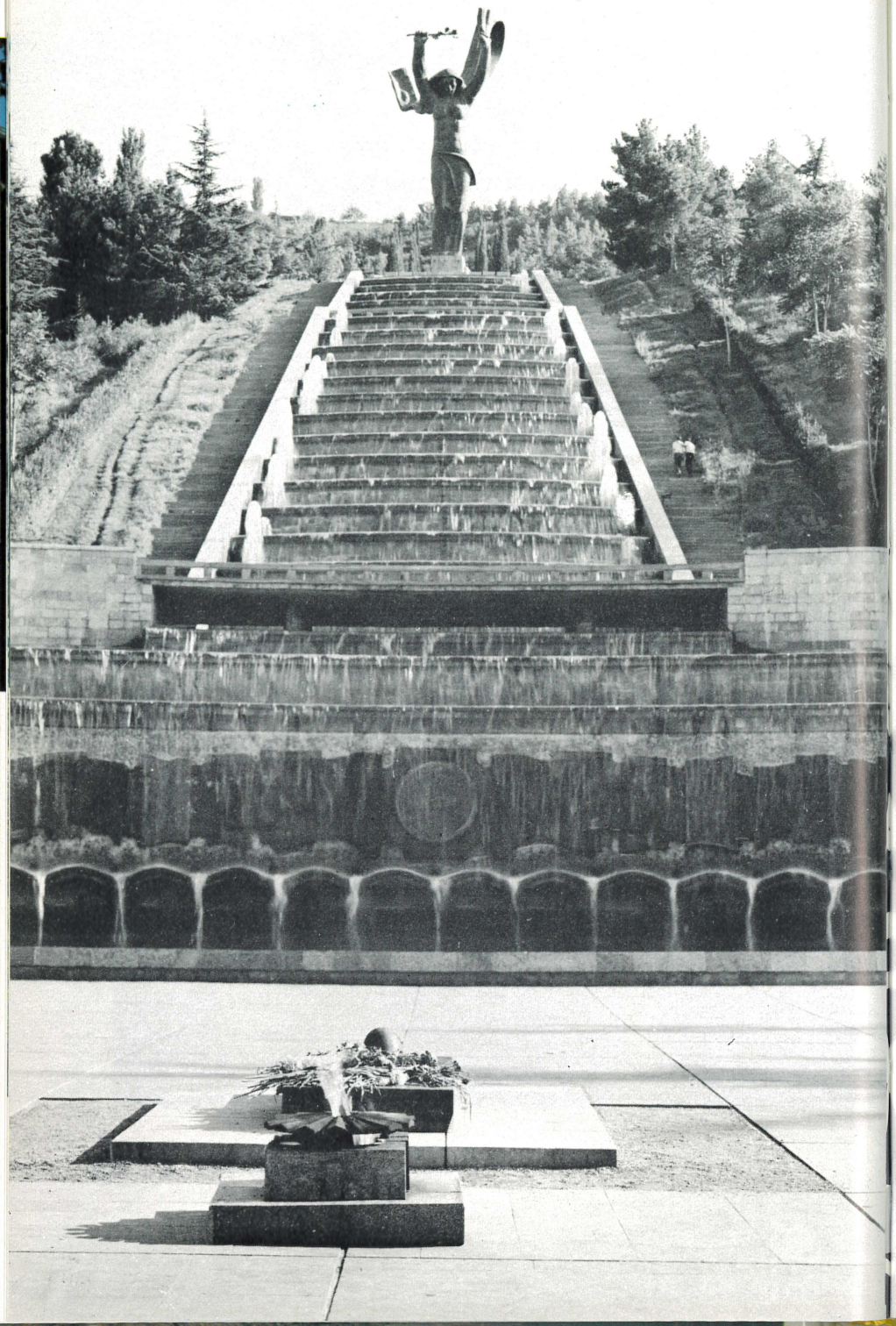
The *darbazi* from the village of Chachkari is adjoined at the rear by an auxiliary service space hacked out of the rock. It has a unique *dedabodzi* pillar with carving, decorative carving on the sides of the first beam, and the ends of the cantilevers are sculpted into ram's heads.

Oda-sakhli house from Guria. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life

The *baniani sakhli* (flat-roofed dwelling) from the Khandaki village belongs to a later date. In this house the hearth is replaced by a fireplace and the light and smoke aperture by windows and a smoke-stack. The dwelling is smaller and has only one pillar in the middle. Yet the wall with the niches is still designed according to the *darbazi* tradition. Adjoining the living house from the rear is a wine cellar (*marani*) and a stone winepress (*satsnakheli*).

Coming from the Colchis zone (Western Georgia) are mainly two types of houses. The more ancient

Jameh mosque from the village of Chikuneti. Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life



dwelling, *sajalabo* (house for a large family), is a one-hall structure with an open anteroom and two doorways along its axis, with a pitched roof, an earthen floor and an open hearth in the middle; it is windowless. A later-date *oda-sakhli* type of house is square in plan. The rooms are situated in two, more seldom three, rows; a broad balcony supported on low pillars or a light base with arched bays runs along the façade. There is a beautiful fireplace in the middle of the house, and the rooms are separated by folding partitions. A pantry and small loggia in the rear connect the dwelling with a courtyard service area.

Houses of this type have richly decorated balconies with benches constructed along the railings and strong columns square in section and adorned by openwork carving.

Inside the houses are items of furniture, objects of everyday use, ceramic and wooden vessels, light fixtures, rugs, carpets, clothing.

Also on display are service buildings such as barns, wattle maize receptacles, winepresses, wells, etc. Of note in the Ajari zone is a *Jameh* wooden mosque from the village of Chikuneti entirely covered with rich carving.

A special sector is set aside for archaeological monuments. Already transferred here is a medieval basilica and crypt from the village of Sioni, a sarcophagus with an ancient inscription from Bolnisi district, a large number of sculptured gravestones whose reliefs are of great historical value and artistic merit.

Memorial and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Victory Park at Vake. 1976. Architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili (1915—1978) and Kiazo Nakhutsrishvili (*b.* 1926), sculptor Giorgi Ochiauri (*b.* 1927)

The museum is being regularly enriched with new items from different parts of the Georgian Republic.

The grounds of the museum are adjacent to a 226-hectare park. Laid out in 1945 to mark the end of the Great Patriotic War, it was named **Victory Park.** A stepped waterfall cascades down the hillside to the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** with its eternal flame. The composition concludes with the 28-metre-high **Statue of Victory** (1976, architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili and K. Nakhutsrishvili, sculptors Giorgi Ochiauri and Zurab Tsereteli).

The Saburtalo District

1. Sports Palace
2. Building of the Ministry of Highways
3. 'Happiness to Nations' Monument
4. Monument to Vazha Pshavela
5. University

Not far from Victory Park the avenue divides and a road driven through rocks takes us to another large residential district, Saburtalo ('place for playing ball'). Saburtalo and Vake are separated by the deep gorge of the small Vere River. In olden times there was a race course here.

Saburtalo is a district of research institutes and educational establishments: the blocks of the Lenin Polytechnical Institute, the Tbilisi Medical Institute, and the new blocks of Tbilisi University.

A **monument to** the great poet and thinker **Vazha Pshavela** (1973, sculptor Giorgi Ochiauri, architects Ramaz Kiknadze and Teimuraz Mikashavidze) stands in a square surrounded by residential high-rises on one of the new broad thoroughfares of the district, the avenue bearing the poet's name. Pshavela's huge figure is invested, just as his work, with mighty primordial force. The figure's expressiveness is enhanced by its intentional angularity, the felt cloak thrown over the shoulders and, especially, by the forceful motion of the arm. The figure, raised on a low pedestal, is surrounded by ibex horns of bronze and large boulders symbolizing the fairy-tale world of Pshavela's poetic imagery.

← Saburtalo. New residential district

Going further down Vazha Pshavela Avenue we come to the **Trade Unions' Palace of Culture** (1971, architect Giorgi Metonidze) with its large mosaic composition *Man, Work — Sense and Beauty of Life*

Main block of Tbilisi University. 1968. Designed by Mikhail Shavishvili (1894—1965) and a team of architects

Monument to Vazha Pshavela (1861—1915) in Vazha Pshavela Avenue. 1973. Sculptor Giorgi Ochiauri (*b.* 1927), architects Romaz Kiknadze (1937—1975) and Teimuraz Mikashavidze (*b.* 1934)

Building of the Ministry of Georgia's Agricultural Construction in Vazha Pshavela Avenue. 1976. Architect Shota Kavlashvili (*b.* 1925)

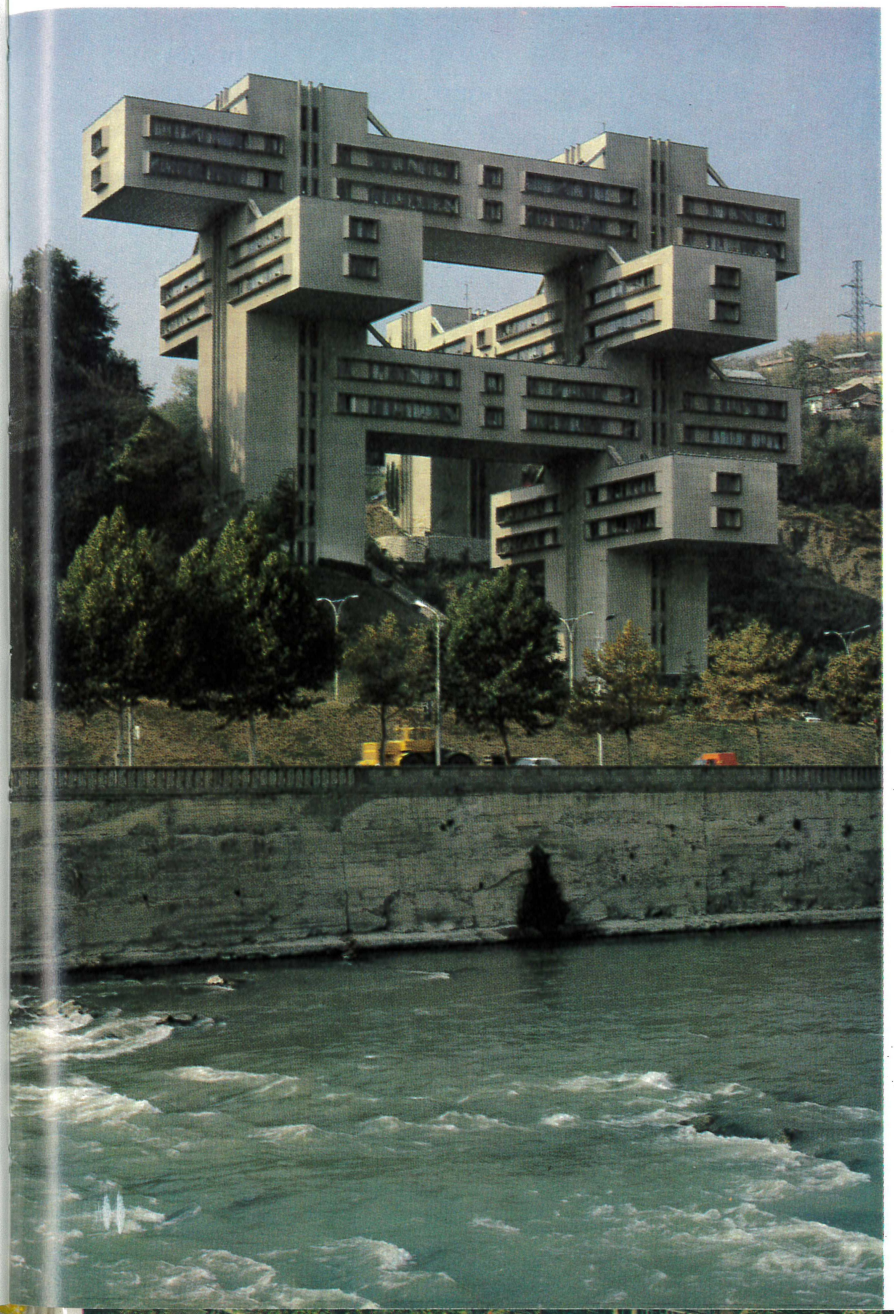
on the façade (artist Zurab Tsereteli). The polychrome panel composed of pieces of smalt catches the eye from afar and dominates the surrounding space. Also of interest is the stained-glass window by the same artist in the foyer of the Palace.

Not far from the Palace of Culture stands a **statue of** the prominent Communist and Soviet statesman **Sergo Ordzhonikidze** (1977, sculptors Kote and Merab Merabishvili).

←
Saburtalo. Vazha Pshavela Avenue

Zurab Tsereteli (*b.* 1934). *Man, Work — Sense and Beauty of Life*. Detail of the mosaic composition on the façade of the Trade Unions' Palace of Culture in Vazha Pshavela Avenue. 1971

Building of the Ministry of Highways in Gagarin Street. 1977. Architects Giorgi Chakhava (*b.* 1923) and Zurab Jalagania (*b.* 1939)



Right at the embankment in the western part of the Saburtalo district is the building of the **Ministry of Highways** (1977, architects Giorgi Chakhava and Zurab Jalagania), noteworthy for its original design. Perched on a rocky bluff are two seventeen-storey towers, on which five horizontal blocks intersecting at right angles are suspended. However controversial the design, there is no denying the brilliant utilization of the rugged topography.

Outstanding among the major public buildings in the Saburtalo district is the **Sports Palace**

Aragvi Restaurant on the Kura Embankment. 1970. Architects Otar Machabeli (*b.* 1930) and Avtandil Revazishvili (*b.* 1929), artist Zurab Tsereteli (*b.* 1934)

(1961, architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili and Yuri Kasradze, designer David Kajaya). In plan the building is a square with an arena in the centre and the stands seating 10,000 arranged in an amphitheatre along its perimeter. Thirty-three entrances give access to the stands. The arena is transformable and, if need be, the capacity of the hall may be increased up to 11,200 seats.

The auditorium is covered by a dome 76 metres in diameter. Its thin-walled shell was assembled of concentric rings without any supporting structures. The interior, spacious, airy and light, is linked with the environment through surrounding glazed gal-

Sports Palace. 1961. Architects Vladimir Alexi-Meskhishvili (1915—1978) and Yuri Kasradze (*b.* 1914). *Ajaria* Hotel. 1975. Architect Mikhail Melia (*b.* 1909)
→
Polytechnical Institute. Architect Mikhail Neprintsev (1877—1962)

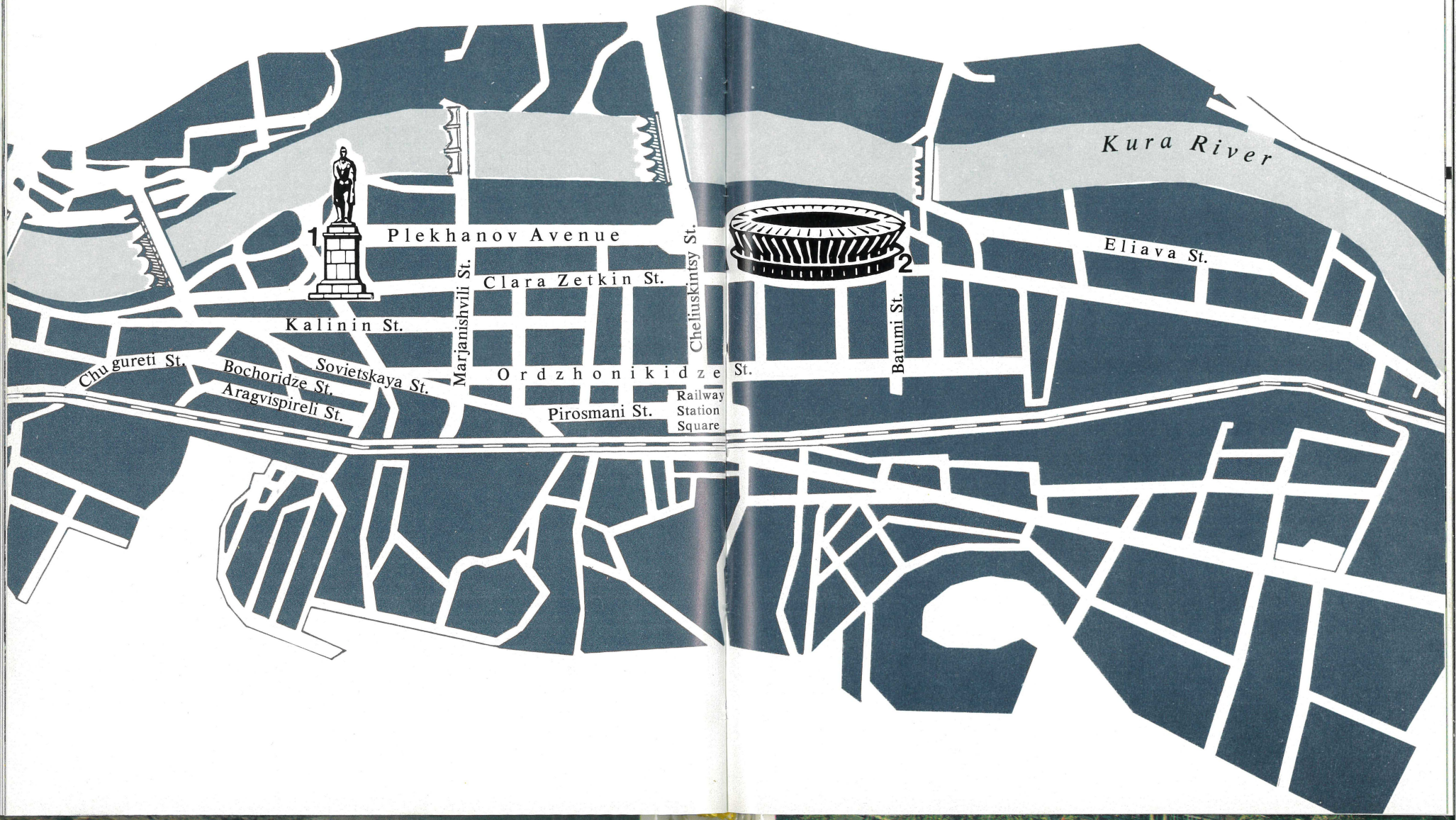
leries. The building's laconic exterior is in harmony with its inner structure. The principal motif of the façades are five-bay arcades creating deep loggia-type porticos. The glazed ribbon of sunshade bands forms a frieze ending in an overhanging cornice plate. The walls are faced with white stone.

In front of the Sports Palace is the bronze figure of an Olympian athlete (1965, sculptor Juansher Mikatadze); the beautiful nude figure adds an expressive note to the building's balanced and quiet composition.

Rising near the Sports Palace and on the same square is the eighteen-storey *Ajaria* Hotel (1975, architect Mikhail Melia). Its white façade gives the square the final touch.

The Left Bank

1. Statue of Griboyedov
2. Dynamo Stadium



Plekhanov Avenue on the left bank of the Kura River runs virtually parallel with Rustaveli Avenue on the right bank. Situated at the end of the avenue is the **Dynamo Stadium** (1935, architect Archil Kurdiani). Radical reconstruction of the stadium in 1977 (architects Archil and Zacharia Kurdiani, designer Shalva Gazashvili) resulted in raising its seating capacity from 30,000 to 75,000.

Occupying the ground floor of a large residential building on the Kura embankment is the **House of Weddings.** The entrance is adorned by a multi-figured white-stone sculptured composition *The Blessing* (sculptor Giorgi Ochiauri). The wall of the vestibule, faced in Bolnisi tufa, bears the chased copper reliefs *Love*, *Wedding*, *Happy Family* (sculptor Irakli

← Embankment of the Kura bank. View of Cheliuskintsy Bridge

Statue of Alexander Griboyedov (1795—1829) on the Kura Embankment. 1961. Sculptor Merab Merabishvili (*b.* 1931)

House of Weddings on the Kura Embankment. 1965. Architects Shota Kavlashvili (*b.* 1925) and Ramaz Kiknadze (1937—1975), sculptor Giorgi Ochiauri (*b.* 1927)

Ochiauri). The main rear wall of the small but pleasant Wedding Parlour is adorned by an embossed relief representing the heads of a bride and groom (Irakli Ochiauri), the only but quite expressive and emotive stroke.

In a park in front of the House of Weddings stands a **statue of** the Russian poet and diplomat **Alexander Griboyedov** (1961, sculptor Merab Merabishvili). He is presented in a posture of deep thought, with the head slightly inclined. The quiet figure is

Monument to Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893—1930) in Friendship Avenue. 1978. Sculptor Guram Kordzakhia (1923—1970)

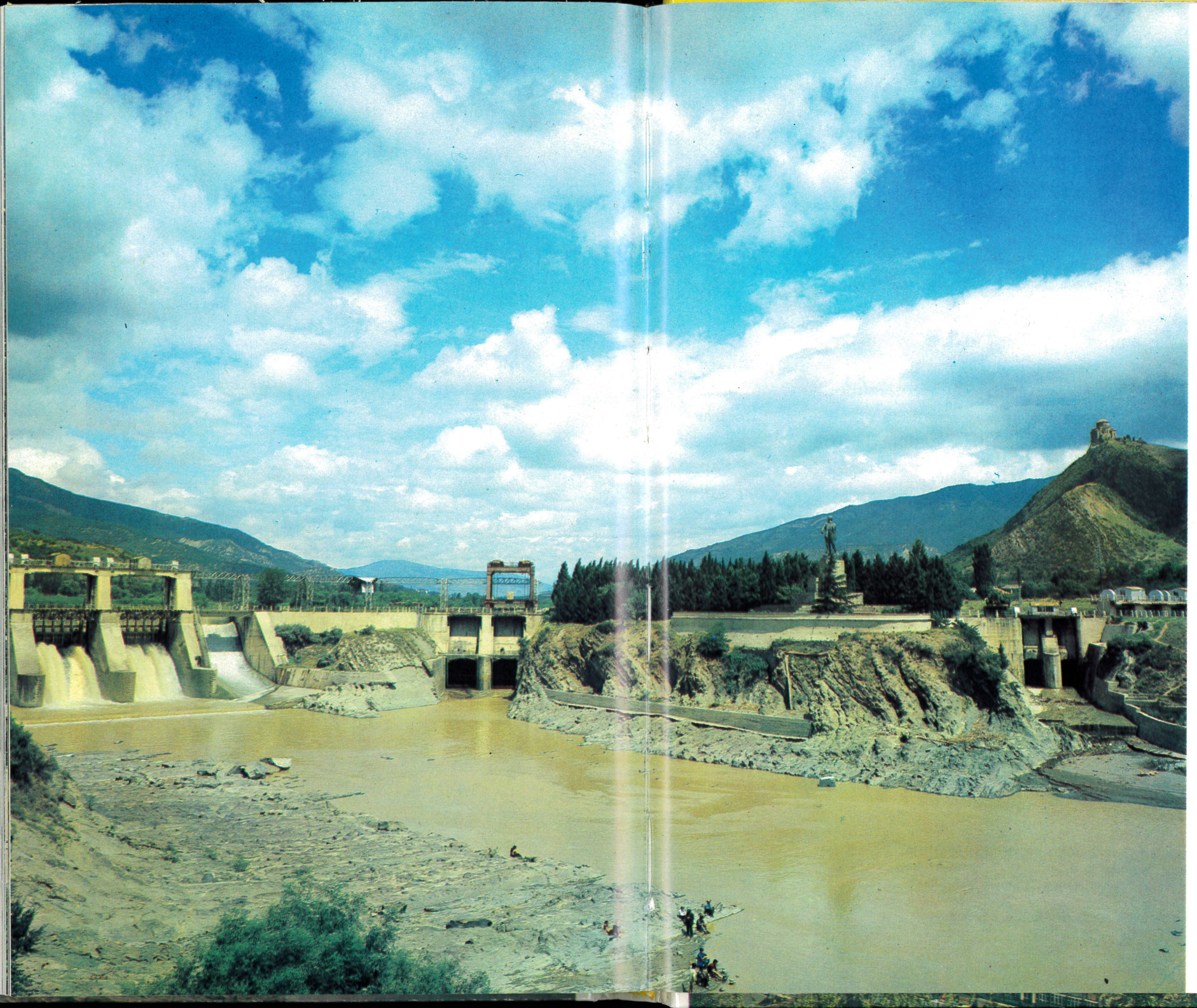
→
Plekhanov Avenue

facing Mount Mtatsminda, the smooth folds of a cloak drop from his shoulders, there are books in his hands.

Digomi, the western-most district of the city, is situated on the picturesque hills near the river amidst abundant vegetation. This is an area of large hospitals and research institutes (mostly of medical specialities). Here is the townlet of the **Gruzia-Film Studios,** many of whose productions have won acclaim at all-union and international film competitions and festivals. The main thoroughfare of this district is Friendship Avenue. Standing here is a **monument to** the outstanding Soviet poet, born in Georgia, **Vladimir Mayakovsky** (1978, sculptor Guram Kordzakhia). The free and confident stance, the stern expression of the face with its prominent cheekbones and stubborn mouth create a convincing image of the fiery tribune he was.

The General Plan for the Development of Tbilisi envisages the careful preservation and reconstruction of old historical districts and limited construction in the centre. The beauty of a city is determined not by individual edifices but by its overall aspect, including its new ensembles. The Plan offers much scope for artistic endeavour. The squares and streets, gardens and parks are being adorned with sculpture, and public buildings with monumental painting. An increasingly important role is played by the architecture of minor forms: kiosks, pavilions, shop-windows and interiors, advertisements and sign-posts, all adding to the city's external aspect.

'Happiness to Nations' Monument on a hill in Digomi. 1981. Artist Zurab Tsereteli (*b.* 1934)



Much care and attention is given to the protection of nature. Forest parks are being planted around the Tbilisi Sea; the park on Mount Mtatsminda is being extended so that it joins the hilly park area in the Vake district; a green belt is being created with a radius of 5 to 15 kilometres. 360 thousand hectares of forest surrounding the city will form the green zone of Tbilisi and Rustavi.

Tbilisi always welcomes its guests with an open heart. Airlines and railways link the city with Moscow, the capital of the Soviet Union, and with other cities of the country; ten highways lead to all the regions of Georgia and many neighbouring republics. Interesting trips can be made along the picturesque **Military Georgian Road** which, before crossing the Caucasian Range, leads to Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia, situated twenty kilometres from Tbilisi, to the land of viniculture — Kakheti. A visit to any of the remarkable ancient architectural monuments of Georgia is bound to leave lasting and indelible impressions.

←
The Military Georgian Road (Tbilisi — Mtskheta section). Monument to Lenin. 1927. Zemo-Avchaly hydroelectric power station. Sculptor Ivan Shadr (1887—1941).
In the distance, the Jvari Church. 6th century

Monument commemorating the Bicentennial of the Georgian Treaty. 1983. Artist Zurab Tsereteli (*b.* 1934)

Practical Information on Museums

Georgian Museum of Art
1, Ketskhoveli Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20,60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11

Branches of the Museum:

Yakov Nikoladze Memorial Museum
6, Rodin Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 3, 20;
trolleys 8, 11

Mose Toidze Memorial Museum
3, Tsulukidze Street
Open daily except Mondays
and Tuesdays,
from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 3, 20;
trolleys 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11

S. Janashia Museum of Georgia
3, Rustaveli Avenue
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11

Tbilisi Picture Gallery
11, Rustaveli Avenue
Open daily from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11

Museum of Georgian Folk Architecture and Life
1, Tortoise Highway
Open daily except Mondays,
from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Transport: buses 3, 20;
trolleys 8, 9, 11

Helena Akhvlediani Memorial Museum
12, Kiacheli Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: 'Rustaveli Avenue'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 4, 6, 8, 11

Irakli Gamrekeli Memorial Museum
14, Dzerzhinsky Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13

Lado Gudiashvili Memorial Museum
11, Ketskhoveli Street. Admission
on advance arrangement
Transport: 'Rustaveli Avenue'
Metro Station; buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 4, 6, 8, 11

David Kakabadze Memorial Museum
11a, Leonidze Street. Admission
on advance arrangement
Transport: buses 2, 3, 20,60;
trolleys 4, 6, 8, 11

Museum of Georgian Folk and Applied Art
6, Akhospireli Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2. 4, 6, 8, 11

Georgian Museum of Theatre, Music and Cinematography
11, Erekle II Square
Open daily except Sundays
and Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 3, 60

Grishashvili Museum of the History and Ethnography of Tbilisi
8, Sioni Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 6 p. m.
Transport: buses 16, 19, 22,
23, 39; trolley 7

Museum of Children's Art
17a, Shavteli Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 3, 60

Akaki Khorava Memorial Museum
4, Janashia Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station; buses 20,60;
trolleys 8, 11

Leonidze Literary Museum of Georgia
8, Jorjiashvili Street
Open daily except Sundays
and Mondays,
from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11

Ilia Chavchavadze Memorial Museum
42, Ordzhonikidze Street
Open daily except Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Transport: 'Mardzhanishvili
Square' Metro Station

Zacharia Paliashvili Memorial Museum
10, Bakradze Street
Open daily except Sundays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 8, 20;
trolleys 4, 8

Toy Museum
6, Rustaveli Avenue
Open daily except Sundays
and Mondays,
from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Transport: buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8

Georgian Artists' House
7, Rustaveli Avenue
Open daily from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Transport: 'Lenin Square'
Metro Station;
buses 2, 3, 20, 60;
trolleys 2, 4, 6, 8, 11

Mtskheta Museum of History, Architecture and Art
Town of Mtskheta,
24, Kalinin Street
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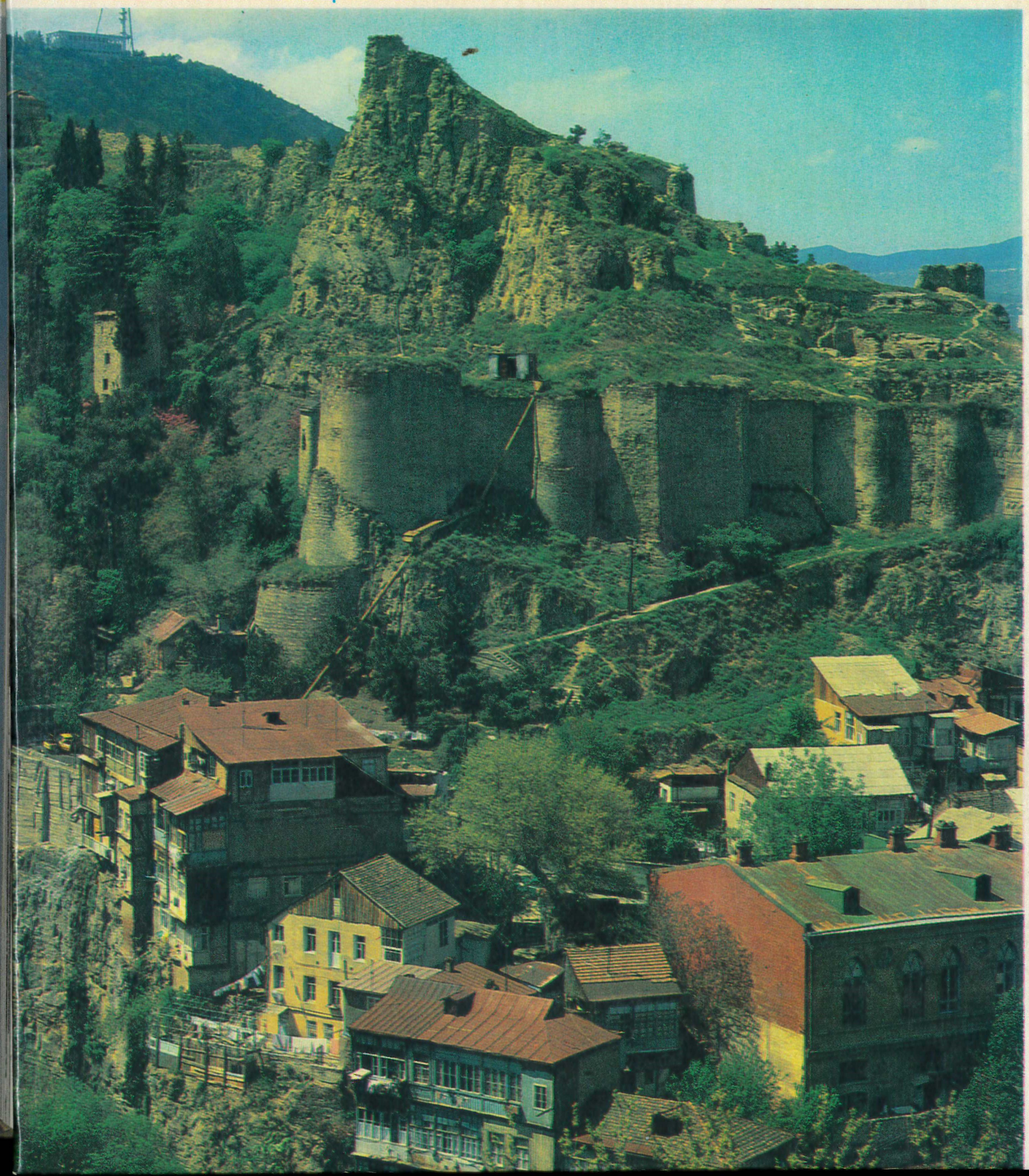
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